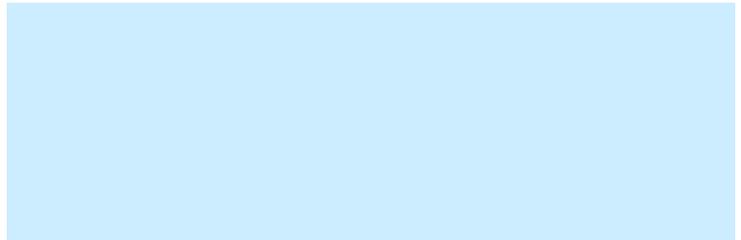


Anxiety Busting

Jenny Cadman, Sarah Lane and Josie Bannon
(Psychological Wellbeing Practitioners)



Helping
Yourself
to...

Reduce your Anxiety!



UNIVERSITY OF
EXETER

It can be hard to ask for help when you are feeling anxious. It can feel as though you are the only one struggling and that everyone else is doing fine. Well done in taking the first step towards tackling the problem and reducing your anxiety!

This booklet is aimed at any student who struggles with anxiety. It includes a student example to illustrate different ideas and techniques. All the techniques in the booklet are based on the Cognitive Behavioural Therapy approach. We will talk more about what that is later in the booklet. CBT has a lot of research to show that it can be very helpful for reducing anxiety. You may be working through the booklet on your own, as part of the Anxiety Busting course or one to one with the support of a practitioner from the Wellbeing Centre. It can also be helpful to talk to someone you trust such as a family member or a friend so you have their support as well through this process.

You will be able to talk through how you have got on using the different techniques and any problems that may have arisen with your practitioner. You can talk together about how to solve these problems and progress with the techniques.

Tackling anxiety can be a difficult and challenging process and there may be times when you feel as though you aren't getting anywhere. Just remember that we all have good days and bad days so try not to let the bad days feel as though you have taken 'two steps back'.

CBT techniques can seem difficult at first but much like exercise, the more you use them the easier they become, until you get to the point where they don't seem like any effort at all. Again, like exercise it is also important to keep up with these techniques as much as possible so they become more of a habit and feel more natural to use.

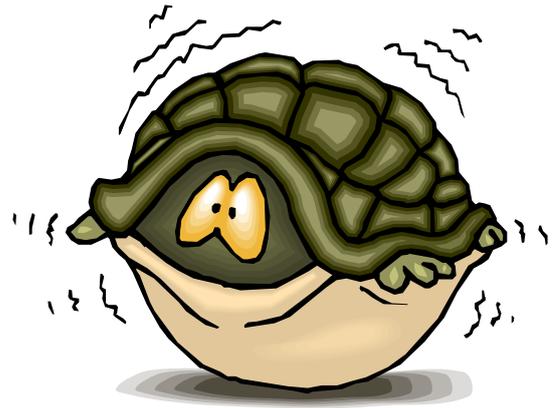
The idea of this booklet is to give you the information you need to help yourself tackle anxiety. This means that you need to have a go at all the techniques to find out which ones are the most helpful for you.

About anxiety

Everyone feels anxious from time to time, and a certain level of anxiety is normal and even beneficial as it makes us pay attention to situations that may be dangerous. Anxiety become a problem when it becomes persistent and starts to impact your day to day life.

Types of anxiety

- Panic attacks
- Social anxiety
- Presentation anxiety
- Obsessive compulsive disorder
- Agoraphobia (a fear of not being able to get to somewhere safe)
- Generalised anxiety (worrying a lot about different things, always feeling tense and on edge)
- Post traumatic stress disorder
- Specific phobias
- Stress



Why we have anxiety

All humans experience anxiety, it's something that we have evolved to experience. It's the physical response to fear that can range from a slight feeling of nervousness up to extreme panic/sheer terror. Anxiety tells us that there is something 'dangerous' to pay attention to, this is why it feels so unpleasant; it gets our attention.

Symptoms of anxiety...

Worry

Worrying a lot about something. It is normal to worry sometimes, however when this worry is frequent and excessive it becomes a problem. Worrying about 'What ifs' and thinking that something bad is going to happen. Feeling as though you can't control your worry.

Problems with concentration

Many people find that they have problems concentrating. This could affect things like reading, writing, talking to others or watching TV. Some people can find they can go over the same paragraph again and again and still not take in the meaning. Some people also find that they have trouble with their short term memory.

Physical anxiety

People often experience physical symptoms when they feel anxious. This can include feeling hot and flushed, increased heart rate, feeling on edge and unable to relax. It can even include panic and feeling as though something terrible is going to happen or a general feeling of dread.

Sleep problems

Either trouble getting to sleep, trouble staying asleep or waking up too early. On the other hand some people sleep too much, either for longer periods or through the day.

Feeling overly tired or fatigued

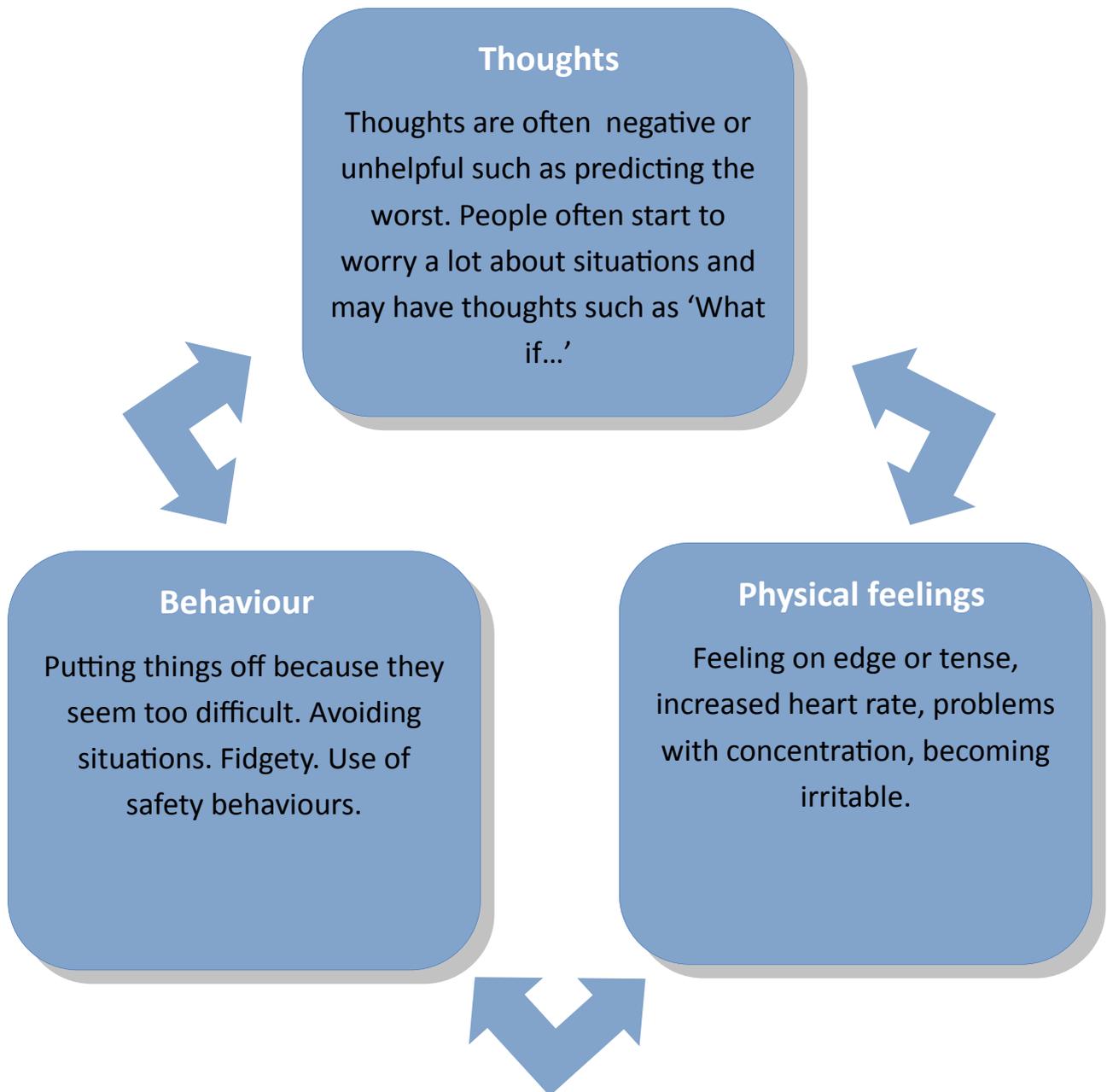
This may or may not be to do with how much sleep you are getting. People often describe feeling drained of energy and say that they wake up tired.

Changes in appetite

Some people find that they have no appetite at all and struggle to eat, others find that they eat more than they would normally.

Not everyone who is anxious will experience all of these symptoms. People will vary in what they experience when they have anxiety.

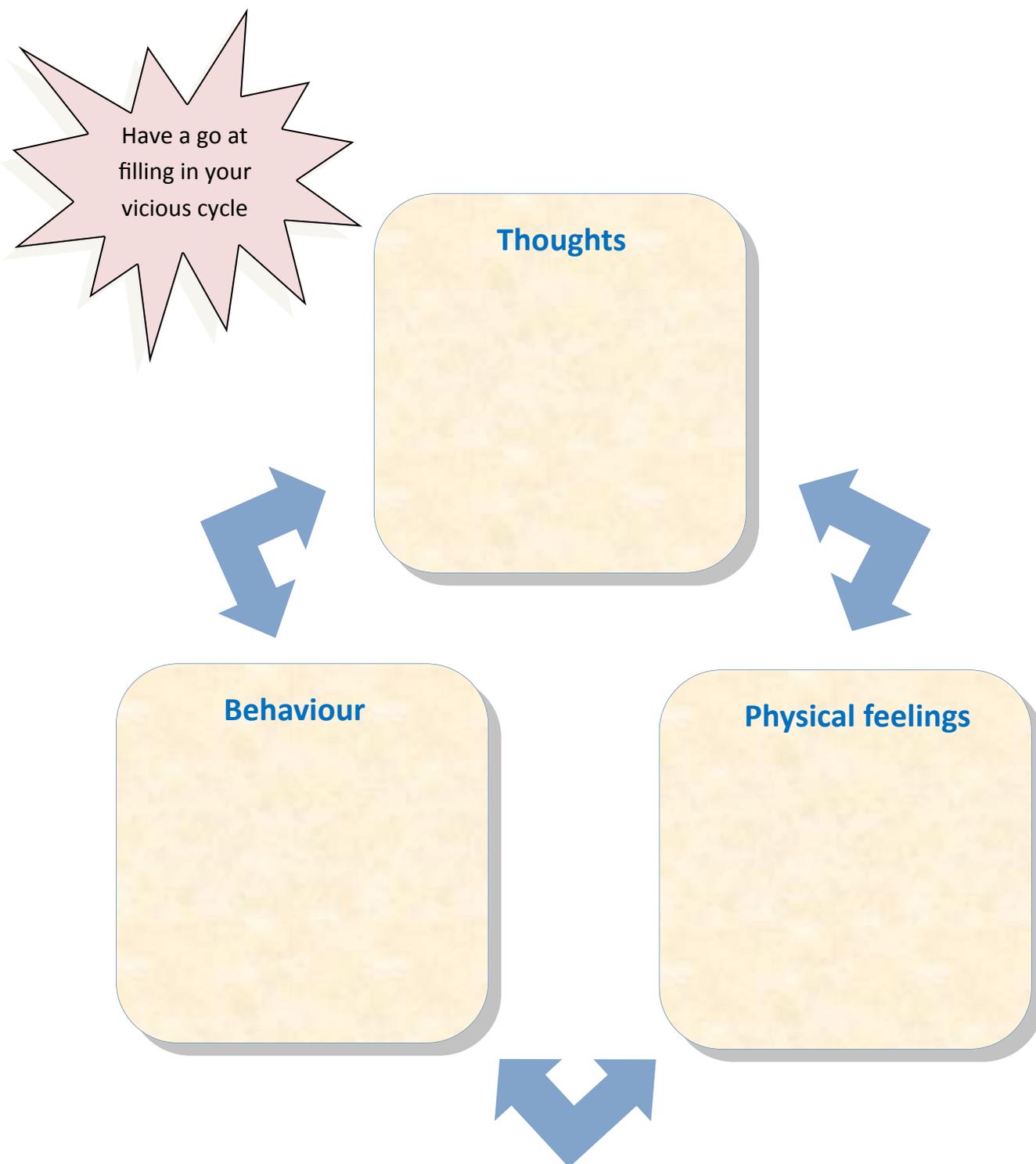
What's affected by anxiety



All of these three areas can be affected by anxiety and each area can start to have additional 'knock on' effects on the other areas. If you are worrying all the time it's likely you will struggle to sleep and that you'll feel tense and on edge. As a result you might start to put off doing the things that are making you feel anxious. However this can cause the pressure to build up and can lead you to worry more and to feel more anxious.

The above diagram shows how you can get 'trapped' in a vicious cycle that can be very difficult to break out of.

How does your anxiety affect you?



The techniques in this booklet are based on the idea of this vicious cycle. Because all of the areas together form the cycle it is possible to tackle anxiety by focusing on any one specific area. The booklet includes techniques focusing on thoughts and behaviours as a way of breaking the cycle. This is where the term 'Cognitive Behavioural Therapy' came from.

FYI: Cognitive refers to processes such as thoughts, memories and attention.

Setting yourself goals to work towards...



It can be really helpful to think about what you would like to achieve from this process. What sorts of things have changed since you started to feel anxious? What would you imagine yourself doing more of or less of if you were feeling better? Circle how well you think you can achieve this currently from 0 (not at all) to 6 (anytime). When writing these goals think about whether you would be able to achieve them in a few months time, it is important that goals are achievable. We will then revisit these each session to see if you are getting any closer to your goal.

Today's date:

Goal One:

I can do this now (circle a number)

0 (not at all) 1 2 (occasionally) 3 4 (Often) 5 6 (Anytime)

Today's date:

Goal Two:

I can do this now (circle a number)

0 (not at all) 1 2 (occasionally) 3 4 (Often) 5 6 (Anytime)

Sally's story...

Sally is in her first year at Exeter University and is studying English. She had a small group of close friends at college but knew no-one in Exeter. She worried a lot about making friends and what the people she was hanging out with thought of her. She felt very on edge in social situations, her heart raced and her hands got really sweaty. She started to avoid crowds and big social situations and made excuses to her friends. She also stayed away from crowded areas like the forum and the town centre. She started to worry that there was something wrong with her as everyone else seemed to be managing fine.



Sally initially set herself a goal to feel calmer, however it is difficult to measure this. Making goals SMART can help.

S

Specific - Be as clear as you can, you may want to 'feel better' but ask yourself what 'feeling better' means you will be able to do e.g. go for more walks.

M

Measurable - How will you know when you have achieved this goal?

A

Achievable - it needs to be something we really want or need to do so that we feel more motivated. Is it a small enough step?

R

Relevant - It needs to be relevant to you, it should match your values.

T

Time bound - You should have a clear idea of when you want to achieve this goal by.

Today's date: 31.03.14

Goal One:

To be able to go out to the pub on a Friday or Saturday night with a group of friends

I can do this now (circle a number)

0 (not at all) 1 2 (occasionally) 3 4 (Often) 5 6 (Anytime)

Why do we experience anxiety?

It is important to remember that all humans experience anxiety. It's the physical response to fear which has kept us safe over the course of evolution. These physical feelings can range from nervousness up to extreme panic/sheer terror.

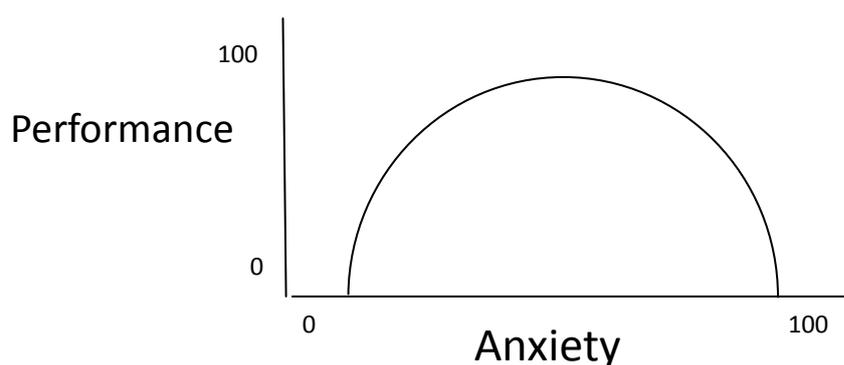
The fight or flight response

When we are exposed to a threat (whether physical or psychological) we experience a fight/flight/freeze response where adrenalin is released into our bodies and causes a series of physiological changes.

Anxiety tells us that there is something dangerous' to pay attention to. This is why it feels so unpleasant; it gets our attention. Often this is a helpful response - for example, if a car was speeding towards us. If we felt no anxiety we are likely to get injured or killed. Anxiety can also help improve performance, for example it can help athletes to perform better during a race.

In some situations this anxiety response is out of proportion to the event and is less adaptive, for example, freezing during an exam or in a social situation.

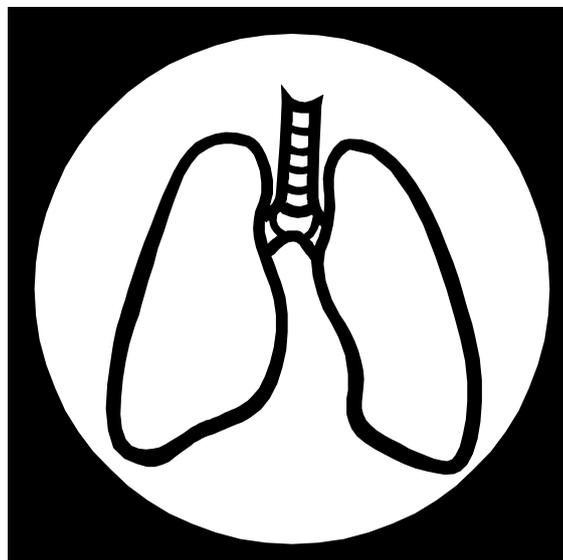
It can be helpful to imagine the graph below - some anxiety will improve your performance, however too much anxiety will impair your performance.



Physiological response to stress

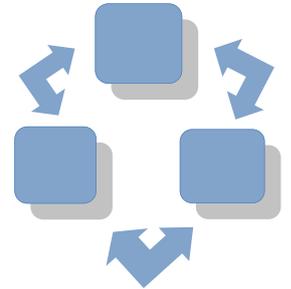
When the fight/flight/freeze response is activated we experience an increase in adrenalin which causes a number of physiological responses. Whilst these can feel unpleasant, they all serve a specific protective purpose and are signs that your body is preparing to fight, to run away or to freeze until the threat passes.

1. **Glucose is released** into our blood stream to give us a surge of energy.
2. **Heart beats faster** to carry extra oxygen in the blood to our muscles and our brain. It may feel like your heart is pounding.
3. **Breathing faster** to increase our oxygen intake which is needed to convert the glucose into energy. You may start to yawn, notice breathlessness, tightness in your chest or dizziness.
4. **Tingling or feeling cold** where blood is diverted away from areas that are not so vital such as vital organs, skin, fingers and toes.
5. **Dry mouth and churning stomach** where blood is diverted from the digestive system to the muscles.
6. **Muscles tense** for action and can result in aches and pains, trembling or shaking
7. **Sweating** originally to make us more slippery to escape from predators. Today it is also the body's way of cooling.
8. **Changes to vision or spots before your eyes** as pupils dilate.



Reducing the physical symptoms of anxiety

As we saw in the vicious cycle, how you feel physically can have a big impact on both your thoughts and what you do. Reducing these physical reactions can help to improve how you are feeling.



Anxiety and breathing...

Anxiety can cause your breathing rate to increase and often involves taking deeper breaths in. This disturbs the balance between oxygen and carbon dioxide in the body. It can lead to feeling dizzy, light headed, and feeling like it's difficult to breathe. Sometimes you might try to breathe more, which unfortunately increases these symptoms and the feelings of anxiety.

Over breathing is not dangerous! But it can make you feel more on edge.

Relaxation: Controlling your breathing

By controlling your breathing and slowing down you can re-balance the oxygen/carbon dioxide levels and can help yourself to feel calmer.

- Make sure you are sitting comfortably.
- Breathe from the abdomen not the chest (check with a hand on both...which one rises).
- Take a breath in for 4 seconds.
- Hold it for 2 seconds.
- Then breathe out for 6 seconds.
- If this is too hard to start with try (in 2, hold 1, out 4).

Anxiety and tension

We often tense our muscles when we feel anxious. This can make us feel more 'on edge' and can cause our muscles to ache and feel sore. We may end up feeling drained and exhausted from holding this tension. Energy is used up which can mean we have less for other things. Headaches (tension headaches) may also occur. We can also become more 'reactive' to things which may cause anxiety.



Relaxation: Releasing tension

A technique that can help to reduce tension is progressive muscle relaxation. This involves tensing and relaxing all the main muscle groups. Before attempting this exercise, consider:

- Any injuries (be careful of tensing).
- Have a relaxing environment free from distractions.
- Don't do this after a big meal or after drinking.

Progressive muscle relaxation

- Tense the muscle but not so much that you feel any pain.
- Hold the tension for about 2 seconds then relax the muscle for about 5 seconds.
- Sometimes saying relax when releasing the muscle is helpful.
- When relaxed let the muscle go limp, feel the weight in the muscle.

Progressive muscle relaxation sequence



Relaxation sequence

1. **Right hand and forearm.** Make a fist with your right hand.
2. **Right upper arm.** Bring your right forearm up to your shoulder to “make a muscle”.
3. **Left hand and forearm.**
4. **Left upper arm.**
5. **Forehead.** Raise your eyebrows as high as they will go, as though you were surprised by something.
6. **Eyes and cheeks.** Squeeze your eyes tight shut.
7. **Mouth and jaw.** Open your mouth as wide as you can, as you might when you’re yawning.
8. **Neck. !!!** Be careful as you tense these muscles. Face forward and then pull your head back slowly, as though you are looking up to the ceiling.
9. **Shoulders.** Tense the muscles in your shoulders as you bring your shoulders up towards your ears.
10. **Shoulder blades/Back.** Push your shoulder blades back, trying to almost touch them together, so that your chest is pushed forward.
11. **Chest and stomach.** Breathe in deeply, filling up your lungs and chest with air.
12. **Hips and buttocks.** Squeeze your buttock muscles
13. **Right upper leg.** Tighten your right thigh.
14. **Right lower leg. !!!** Do this slowly and carefully to avoid cramps. Pull your toes towards you to stretch the calf muscle.
15. **Right foot.** Curl your toes downwards.
16. **Left upper leg.** Repeat as for right upper leg.
17. **Left lower leg.** Repeat as for right lower leg.
18. **Left foot.** Repeat as for right foot.

Practice means progress. Only through practice can you become more aware of your muscles, how they respond with tension, and how you can relax them. Training your body to respond differently to stress is like any training – practising consistently is the key.

Relaxing 'safe place' imagery

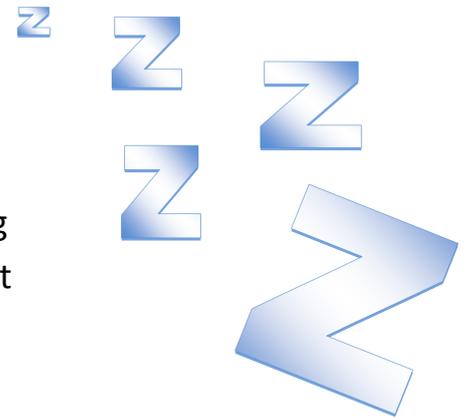


The effect that mental images can have on our physiology is amazing. Just take a minute to imagining your favourite meal, imagining how it would look, the aroma, the texture as you take the first mouthful and the delicious flavours. Now, what do you notice happening? Do you have increased saliva in your mouth, or a rumbling in you stomach? The images we have in our minds have a direct impact on how we feel and our physiology. With this in mind, practicing relaxing imagery exercises can be really helpful at calming the body and mind.

- Start by getting comfortable in a quiet place where you won't be disturbed, and take a couple of minutes to focus on your breathing, close your eyes, become aware of any tension in your body, and let that tension go with each out-breath.
- Imagine a place where you can feel calm, peaceful and safe. It may be a place you've been to before, somewhere you've dreamed about going to, somewhere you've seen a picture of, or just a peaceful place you can create in your mind's eye.
- Look around you in that place, notice the colours and shapes. What else do you notice?
- Now notice the sounds that are around you, or perhaps the silence. Sounds far away and those nearer to you. Those that are more noticeable, and those that are more subtle.
- Think about any smells you notice there.
- Then focus on any skin sensations - the earth beneath you or whatever is supporting you in that place, the temperature, any movement of air, anything else you can touch.
- Notice the pleasant physical sensations in your body whilst you enjoy this safe place.
- Now whilst you're in your peaceful and safe place, you might choose to give it a name, whether one word or a phrase that you can use to bring that image back, anytime you need to.
- You can choose to linger there a while, just enjoying the peacefulness and serenity. You can leave whenever you want to, just by opening your eyes and being aware of where you are now, and bringing yourself back to alertness in the 'here and now'.

Sleep problems

Sleep problems are really common, most people will have problems with their sleep at some point in their lives. Being at University can also make sleep more difficult, the student life style can mean it's harder to keep a routine and stick to healthy sleeping habits. A lot of people who experience anxiety have problems with not sleeping enough, or sleeping too much which can then make everything seem much harder.



There are 4 main types of sleep problem:

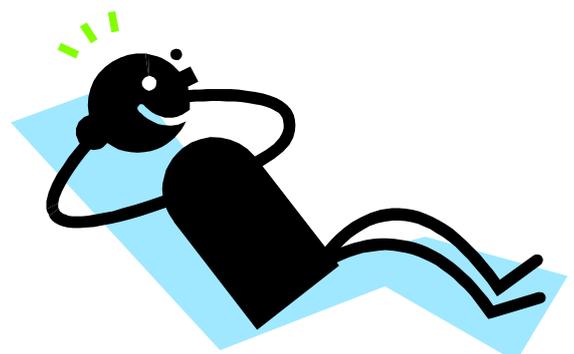
- Falling asleep
- Staying asleep
- Non restorative/light sleep
- Waking up to early

Problems with sleep can form part of the vicious cycle of anxiety, if we are feeling tired or groggy then we are more likely to worry about things and less able to get things done.

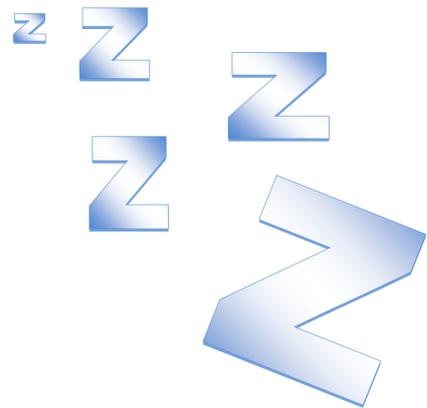
Preparing for sleep...

It is really important to allow yourself time to 'wind-down' after each day. Otherwise your body and mind will still be active when you try to sleep. Without wind-down time you may end up lying in bed with loads of thoughts going through your head.

Wind-down time should last at least an hour. During this time try to do relaxing and enjoyable things, avoid all uni work or anything that makes you feel stressed. Doing the same thing each night can help your body to recognise that it will be time to sleep in an hour.



How to improve your sleep: Lifestyle habits



Another way to improve sleep is to look at the things you could improve in your lifestyle. Below are some examples of different things that might influence your sleep.

Alcohol interrupts the quality of sleep a person has and can cause more waking in the night. It can also lead to tiredness in the day.

Getting up at the same time each day is one of the most important things you can do to improve your sleep. Even if you haven't slept much the night before!



Going to bed full up or hungry can interfere with sleep, best to have an early dinner and a light snack before bed.

Physical activity is great for improving sleep; but avoid 4 hours before bed time.

Nicotine and caffeine are both stimulants and can interfere with getting to sleep. Try to avoid 4-6 hours before going to bed.

I'm going to Change:

How to improve your sleep:

Things in the environment

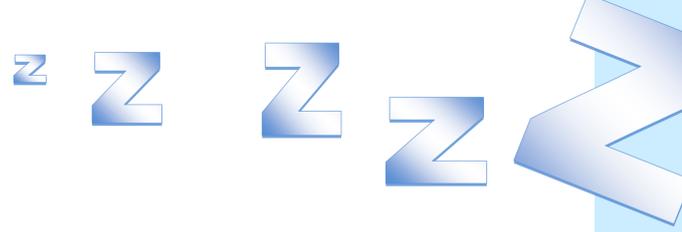
Another way to improve sleep is to look at what you might be able to change in your environment. Below are some examples of environmental factors that might influence your sleep.

What could you change in your bedroom that could help your sleep?



I'm going to Change:

4 Rules for better sleep



The association we have between our bed and sleep can make a big difference to how easily we fall asleep. If we often lie in bed worrying and struggle to get to sleep we might start to associate the bed with stress rather than calmness and sleep. The longer we spend in bed awake, the weaker the association will be with sleep. Below are 4 different rules to strengthen the association between bed and sleep which will help to improve sleep.

1 The bed is for sleep rule

Everything else (except sex) is banned! So no reading; working; talking on the phone; looking at the internet; nothing in bed but sleep. Sometimes this might be difficult being a student; but its worth doing if sleep is a problem. Some people do find reading in bed helpful, however this is also about association. Good sleepers read to stay awake; poor sleepers read to get to sleep.

Healthy sleepers generally fall asleep within twenty minutes. If you are lying in bed unable to get to sleep for longer than this then the association between bed and wakefulness/ anxiety is strengthened. If your not asleep within 20 minutes; get up, go into a different room if possible and do something relaxing until you feel sleepy again, then go back to bed.

2 The 20 minute rule

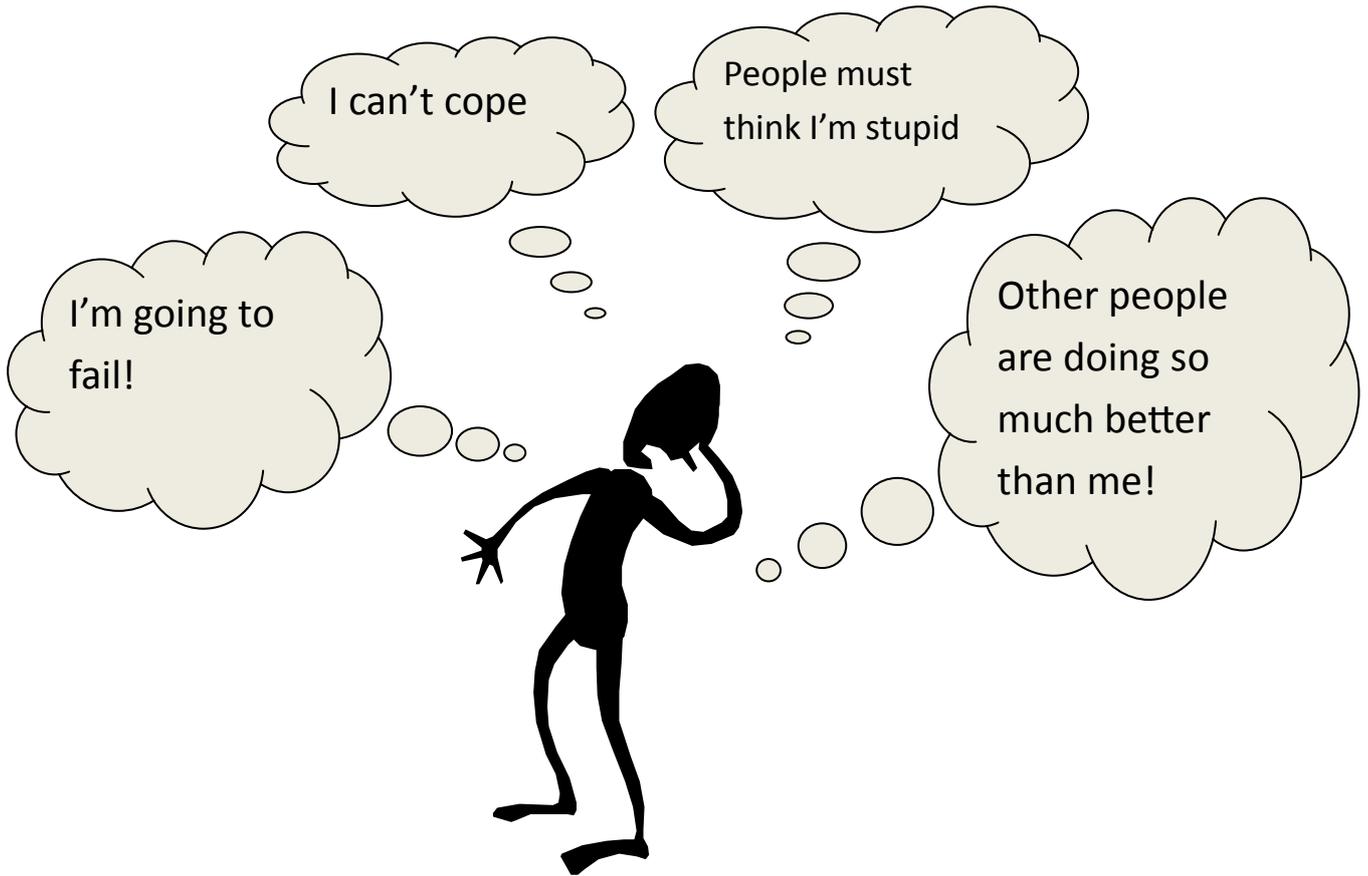
3 The sleepy rule

Feeling tired and feeling sleepy are different. You can actually feel tired without feeling sleepy but you should only try to go to sleep when you feel sleepy. When you feel sleepy you might yawn a lot, have hot, heavy eyes that feel like they want to close and have heavy muscles.

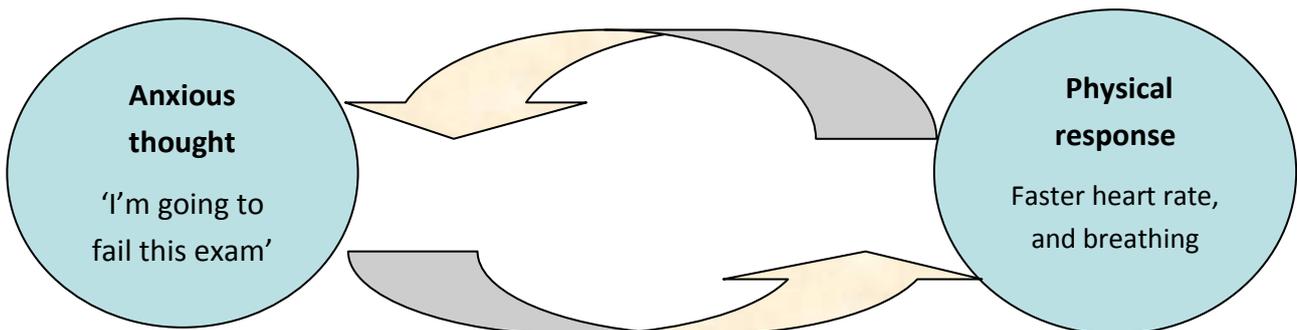
Only sleep at night. Make sure not to nap in the day, no matter how much sleep you missed the night before. Napping in the day decreases the need to sleep at night and gets rid of the 'sleepy' feeling you need to fall asleep at night.

4 The night time rule

About negative thoughts...



When feeling anxious, negative thoughts and worries are very common. We may think negatively about ourselves, others current situations as well as the future, these thoughts only make us feel worse. Its part of the vicious cycle that we can get trapped into. Challenging these thoughts is another way of breaking the cycle.



Characteristics of unhelpful thoughts:

Automatic: We don't think them on purpose; they come into our minds involuntarily. **Believable:** They seem real at the time. **Unhelpful:** They are the kind of thoughts that would be upsetting to anybody. **Distorted:** They are not accurate reflections of reality but based on how we feel at the time.

Unhelpful thinking styles

Have a look through the thoughts you have recorded and see if any of these thinking styles apply, these can be helpful to refer to when trying to generate evidence.

<p>All or nothing thinking (sometimes called 'black and white thinking')</p> <p>Seeing only one extreme or the other. There are no in-betweens or shades of grey.</p> 	<p>Jumping to conclusions</p> <p>Mind-reading Assuming we know what someone else is thinking.</p> <p>Fortune telling Predicting what's going to happen in the future.</p> 
<p>Over-generalising</p> <p>Seeing a pattern based upon a single event or being overly broad in the conclusions we draw. Tends to involve the words always, everyone, never.</p> 	<p>Emotional reasoning</p> <p>Assuming that because we feel a certain way what we think must be true.</p> 
<p>Magnification and minimisation</p> <p>Blowing things out of proportion (catastrophising), or inappropriately shrinking something to make it seem less important.</p> 	<p>Shoulds and musts</p> <p>Putting unreasonable demands or pressure on yourself or others. Using critical words which make us feel guilty or like we have failed.</p> 
<p>Mental filter</p> <p>Only paying attention to certain types of information such as noticing failures but not successes.</p> 	<p>Personalisation</p> <p>Blaming yourself or taking responsibility for something that wasn't completely your fault or blaming other people for something that was your fault.</p> 
<p>Disqualifying the positive</p> <p>Discounting the good things that have happened or that you have done.</p> 	<p>Labelling</p> <p>Assigning labels to ourselves or other people.</p> 
<p>Compare and despair</p> <p>Seeing only the good points in others compared with the bad ones in yourself.</p> 	<p>Memories</p> <p>Current situations triggering memories of past upsetting events.</p> 

Thinking styles quiz

John has just received a piece of course work back, the grade was what he wanted but he notices the feedback saying he needs to be more critical. He feels terrible about this and starts to think that he is not that good at writing essays. He starts to remember other times when he did not do well at essays, and thinks "I should do better". He starts to worry about what his tutor will think of him.

Thinking Styles: _____

Sally sees her friend Kate at the top of the stairs in the forum. She waves but Kate doesn't wave back. Sally thinks, 'Kate doesn't like me anymore, she's ignoring me. I must have done something to upset her. I've never had many friends – I guess I'm just not very likeable.' Later on that day she doesn't text Kate about going out for a drink.

Thinking Styles: _____

Beth has just started Uni, she's made some friends in her halls but is very nervous and worries about what other people will think of her. When she hears about a social of people from her course she thinks: 'I can't go to the pub with the people from my course. They will see how nervous I am. No-one will talk to me and I will be all on my own and look silly'.

Thinking Styles: _____

Tony is about to give a presentation and notices that he feels nervous. He thinks 'oh no– this is going to be terrible –my mind will go blank – I'll dry up and won't be able to say anything. I'll make a complete fool of myself, its going to be so embarrassing.' I bet this will affect my mark too.

Thinking Styles: _____

Cognitive Restructuring: Challenging your thoughts

Cognitive Restructuring is a technique that aims to change unhelpful thoughts by identifying and challenging them. The idea behind this technique is that it can help you start thinking more how you would normally, when not feeling anxious. It can help you to see situations more objectively again by lifting the veil of subjective, negative thinking. Cognitive Restructuring reduces anxiety by targeting the unhelpful thinking styles that maintain it. It does this by using questions to help you consider different perspectives and generate factual evidence to challenge your unhelpful thoughts.

Challenging negative thoughts can be difficult at first, but over time it gets easier and easier.

The three steps of Cognitive Restructuring

1 Recording your thoughts in a Thought Diary



2 Looking at evidence for and against your thoughts

3 Revising your initial thought

1 Recording your thoughts

Firstly, you need to identify the content of your unhelpful thoughts. Each time you notice an increase in your anxiety, complete the initial three columns of the Thought Diary sheet.

- In the first column write down a brief description of the situation you were in when the thought occurred i.e. where you were and what you were doing.
- In the second column write down one emotional word to describe the feeling you had as a result of the thought e.g. sad, anxious or angry. Also rate how bad that feeling was on a scale of 0-100%.
- In the third column write down exactly what the thought was i.e. the words that went through your mind or the image that occurred. Then rate how much you believe that thought to be true, where 0 is not at all and 100% is totally believe the thought.
- For the time being, ignore the last two columns; we return to complete these in the final stage of the process. It is suggested you collect your thoughts in this way for one or two weeks, depending on how frequently unhelpful thoughts are occurring for you.



Sally spent a week noting down unhelpful thoughts as they arose. An example of one of her thoughts is detailed below...

Situation Where you were and what you were doing	Feeling Emotion experienced and rating of how bad it was (0-100%)	Thought Words that went through your mind and rating of how much you believe this thought (0-100%)	Revised Thought Words of new thought and rating of how much you believe this thought (0-100%)	Feeling Emotion experienced and rating of how strong it was (0-100%)
Waved to Kate but she didn't wave back	Worried (70%), anxious (60%)	"I have done something to upset her" 65%		

Worksheet A - Thought Diary

Situation Where you were and what you were doing	Feeling Emotion experienced and rating of how bad it was (0-100%)	Thought Words that went through your mind and rating of how much you believe this thought (0-100%)	Revised Thought Words of new thought and rating of how much you believe this thought (0-100%)	Feeling Emotion experienced and rating of how strong it is (0-100%)

2 Challenging your thoughts



Next you examine your thoughts in an objective way. We do this by collecting evidence for and against a particular thought to see whether it is accurate or not.

Choose a frequent thought from the ones you have noted on your diary sheet. Write the thought down in the top left corner of the Evidence Table sheet and note the percentage belief rating in the top right box.

Then, imagine that you are the judge in a court where the evidence for and against the truth of your thought is being examined. Write down the evidence for each side in the table. Remember that the evidence should be factual and that you need to present the full picture so that a fair decision can be made. Generating the 'Evidence Against' can be difficult as it is something you a probably not used to doing. Some questions to help you to do this are given on the next page.

Next Sally chose one of her thoughts and considered the evidence for and against it...

Thought	% Belief
"I have done something to upset her"	65%
Evidence For	Evidence Against
She did not wave to me	I saw her yesterday and we were fine and had a good time
She cancelled our lunch the other day	She never said anything about me upsetting her
	In the past when I have upset her she told me straight away
	We have plans tomorrow and she hasn't cancelled them
	Her parents are in the middle of a break up, she has got a lot on her mind

Generating evidence against your thoughts

It can help to imagine that you are a judge in the court house and that evidence needs to be presented for and against the thought. In court cases evidence provided needs to be factual and concrete, it is exactly the same for the evidence here. We want to get to the bottom of whether this thought is based on the facts or whether its based on how you feel.



It can be really difficult coming up with concrete evidence to start with, particularly against the thought as you may be more in the habit of looking for evidence to support your negative thoughts! Below are some tips for generating evidence.

What alternative views are there?

- If you rate the belief in your thought as 75%, what makes up the remaining 25%?
- How would a friend or someone who cares about you view this situation?
- How would I have viewed this situation before I felt depressed?
- How would I view someone else in my situation?

Does this thought fit with any of the thinking styles on page 21?

- If it does then this means you are only looking at this from one perspective, what is the other perspective?
- E.g. if you notice the thought fits into a 'self blaming' style of thinking then write down all of the other external factors which might have been involved.

What action could I take?

- Am I assuming I can do nothing to change my situation?
- Am I overlooking solutions to problems on the assumption they won't work?

Are there any good reasons to be so worried?

- Have you been wrong about similar things in the past?
- Will this problem matter in a week/month year?

3 Revising your initial thought



Finally, you reconsider the original thought taking all the evidence into consideration to put it into perspective. Try to come up with a revised thought based on both sides of the argument.

Write down the new thought in the fourth column of the Thought Diary and rate how much you believe it.

In the final column re-rate your feeling using the same 0-100% scale. Notice if your emotion has changed as a result of changing your thought.

Remember, unhelpful thinking takes time to change; it may often be necessary to challenge your thoughts several times before you notice a difference in how you feel. As you become more expert in this approach you will start to find that the process becomes more automatic and you are able to catch the thoughts and judge them as they actually happen.

Finally Sally looked back at her initial thought and, considering all the evidence she had noted both for and against the thought, came up with the following alternative thought...

Revised Thought What is your new more balanced thought? How much you believe this thought (0-100%)?	Feeling Re-write the emotion you had previously. State how strong the emotion is when you have your new thought (0-100%)
<i>"She has a lot on her mind and probably didn't see me"</i>	<i>Worried (30%) Anxious (20%)</i>

You can think about thoughts like pathways in a field: the more you have a thought the more entrenched the path becomes, until it becomes the automatic route you take. By challenging these thoughts, you are stopping yourself going down that automatic path and instead creating a new path. This might feel weird at first because you have not used this 'path' before (or thought in this way), but the more you use it and the less you use the 'old' path (or thought), the more entrenched it will become and the more 'overgrown' the old path will feel. Eventually the new way of thinking will be the one which you automatically go down.

Worksheet B - Evidence Table

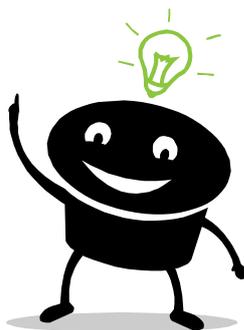
Thought	% Belief
Evidence For	Evidence Against

Problem solving

There may be specific problems that you are worrying about. When you are feeling anxious these problems can feel overwhelming and it can feel impossible to find a solution. This problem solving technique can help you to think through the problem and to identify practical solutions. This might also be a helpful technique to use if you find you have more evidence for a negative thought than against it. If the thought is based on the facts then it is more helpful to think about what can be done to overcome this problem rather than simply change how you think about it.

7 Steps to problem solving

- 1 Problem identification** - What is the specific problem?
- 2 Solution identification** - What are all the potential solutions? Even those that sound absurd!
- 3 Strengths and weaknesses analysis** - What are the strengths and weaknesses of each solution?
- 4 Solution selection** - Which solution is the best?
- 5 Implementation plan** - Plan what, where, when and who?
- 6 Implementation** - Carry out the planned solution
- 7 Review** - Review the original problem. Has this made a difference?



Problem Solving Worksheet A

Step 1: Problem identification (write your problem here)

--

Step 2: Solution Identification (write down as many different solutions as possible– use additional sheets if necessary)

--

Step 3: Strengths and Weaknesses Analysis (write down the advantages and disadvantages of each solution here – use additional sheets if necessary)

--

Step 4: Solution selection (choose one solution)

--

Step 5: Implementation plan (write down the steps you will take to apply your chosen solution – use additional sheets if necessary)

--

Step 6: Implementation (Carry out the Plan)

Step 7: Review (write down how the plan went)

--

Problem Solving Worksheet B: Strengths and weaknesses analysis

Choice? Yes/No/Maybe					
Weaknesses					
Strengths					
Solution					

Noticing the positives

When we feel anxious sometimes we pay more attention to the negative or stressful things that happen to us each day.

Noticing and remembering the positives is a way of trying to re-balance our attention and improve our mood.

Before going to bed write down 5 things that happened that day that were positive - They can be anything, however big or small.

This can also help to put you in a more positive mind set which might mean falling asleep is easier.



5 positives from my day

1. Not getting stuck in the rain on my way home
2. Having a nice chat with my Mum
3. The view from the top of the hill
4. The gingerbread latte from Costa
5. My favourite song was played on the radio

How to manage worry

Often when we feel anxious we tend to worry a lot more, but worrying can also make us feel more anxious and on edge, this can then form another part of the vicious cycle. Everybody worries from time to time and it can help us to solve problems and consider different options, however sometimes we can get caught in a cycle of worrying that doesn't solve any problems and only leads to us feeling more anxious.

Worry time can be helpful when you notice that the same worries keep going round and round your head and you are not able to control them. Often these worries make you feel more anxious and when we try and stop ourselves from worrying what tends to happen is we worry even more. Trying to not think about something just doesn't work, worry time is a way of giving limited time to worrying, so we are not just trying to block it out but we are containing the worry so it does not impact so much through the day.

- Whenever you notice a worry write it down (make a list)
- Give yourself a set amount of undisturbed time each day to go through your list
- Separate practical worries (e.g. problems that you can do something about) from hypothetical worries (e.g. 'What ifs')
- Write an action for all practical worries (what; when; where and who?)
- Give yourself time to think about the hypothetical worries (Not right before going to bed)
- Once the time is up you need to stop worrying and focus on something else
- You might want to screw the paper up
- Try and do something engaging and get a change of scenery
- Any worries that you have outside of your worry time; write them down and think e.g. "I will think about that tomorrow at 5:00. There is no need to worry about it now"
- When in bed, try to focus your attention on your breathing, in-out, in-out
- Notice when your mind wanders and bring your attention back to your breathing or do something engaging where it is difficult to worry

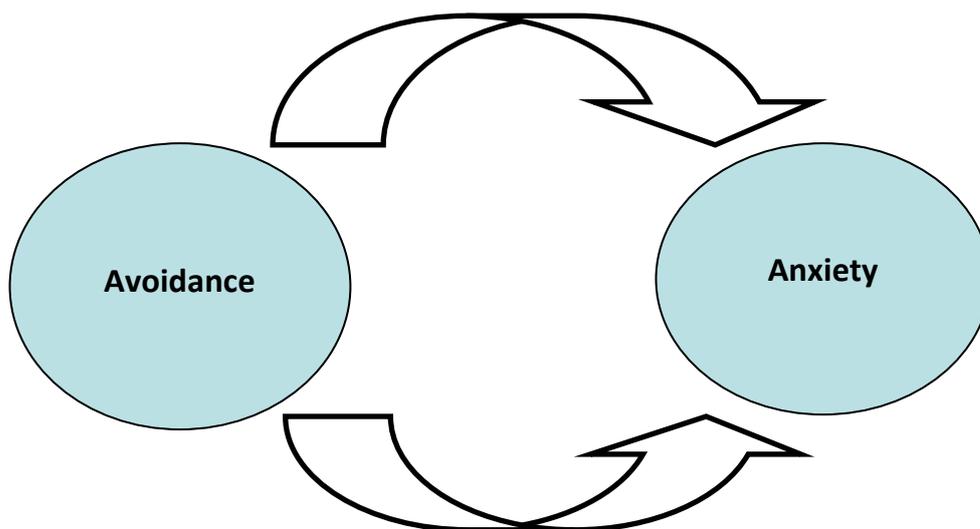


What keeps anxiety going?

We have looked at how changing thoughts can reduce anxiety, now we are going to move on to look at behaviour. These few pages give an idea of the types of things that we DO which contribute to our anxiety and maintain the cycle of anxiety.

Avoidance/escaping...

- We have a natural tendency to avoid feared situations or objects (flight)
- Avoiding situations reduces anxiety quickly in the short-term
- If you avoid a situation once, this increases the likelihood of avoiding it next time
- Leads to a vicious cycle of avoidance and anxiety



It is completely understandable that you would want to avoid the situations that trigger your anxiety, after all the fight or flight response is telling you that this is a 'dangerous' situation. But by avoiding these situations it does mean that the next time you're confronted with the same situation you are going to feel just as anxious as before, or maybe even more so. Avoiding certain situations may also start to have a negative impact on your life which can make you feel worse.

Safety behaviours



When we feel anxious it is natural to want to do whatever we can to feel better. Often we will still go into the situations that make us feel anxious, however we will do certain things to reduce the anxiety, e.g. playing with our phone at a party if we are worried about not having people to talk to. We call these things safety behaviours. They are behaviours that make you feel safer and therefore less anxious. But they also prevent you from gaining the valuable experiences that will help you overcome anxiety. They also mean that you start to rely on them and feel that you would not have coped if you hadn't used the safety behaviour.

Situation	Thoughts or risk	Safety Behaviour
Going to a party	I will not have anyone to talk to. Everyone will see me standing on my own	Stay close to a friend all night, and pretend to go out and use phone when they go to the toilet
Going to the supermarket	I might collapse	Not letting go of the trolley
Attending a tutor group meeting	If I get something wrong people will laugh at me	Sit at the back, keep quiet, only talk about things you are confident about, avoid eye contact
Crowded areas	I will not be able to escape if I need to	Stay close to the exits
Giving a presentation	Everyone will see that I am going red, they will judge me	Wear more foundation to cover it up

Tackling negative predictions

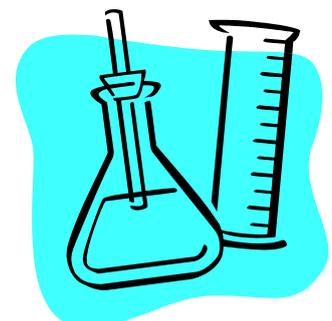


When we feel anxious, it is common to make negative predictions about what's going to happen in the future. Predicting the worst tends to lead us to engagement in unhelpful behaviours such as avoidance and safety behaviours. By avoiding situations or always using safety behaviours we are never able to test our predictions and find out what actually would have happened in that situation. If the outcome was different to what we predicted this could really help to break the cycle of anxiety. Behavioural experiments are a good way of testing negative predictions in a systematic way.

Testing predictions: The process

We can test our negative predictions by following the steps detailed below:

- 1** Note down the thought or belief you wish to test and rate how strongly you believe this
- 2** Note an alternative prediction or belief and rate how strongly you believe it
- 3** Design the experiment – What will you do to test the prediction? Where? When? For how long? With whom?
- 4** Consider any safety behaviours that would need to be dropped
- 5** Consider likely problems and how they could be overcome
- 6** Note the outcome
- 7** Note the learning and re-rate the belief in the original prediction



Sally's example

Sally feels nervous in social situations, she tends to go to events where she knows everyone, or goes with one friend that will stay with her all night, she thinks she will not have anything to say to someone she does not know and that they will be bored and leave. If she goes to an event where she doesn't know many people and her friend goes to the toilet Sally will find somewhere quiet and play on her phone until she comes back. She will often make up excuses for not going to such events, like having a deadline the next day or feeling too tired.

What are the thoughts and behaviours that are feeding into Sally's vicious cycle of anxiety?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



Testing negative predictions Sally's example

Step 1: Negative thought or belief to be tested	How much do you believe this prediction ? (0-100%)
If I talk to someone I don't know well when out socially I will clam up and have nothing to say	90%
Step 2: What is an alternative prediction?	How much do you believe this prediction ? (0-100%)
I will feel nervous but will be able to maintain a conversation	0%
Step 3: Experiment design– What will you do to test the prediction? Where? When? For how long? With whom?	
Next time I go out to the pub I will try speaking to a friend of a friend who I don't know well for at least 10 minutes	
Step 4: What safety behaviours would you need to drop?	
Staying with people I know well	
Step 5: What things may get in your way? How will you overcome these?	
There may not be a naturally occurring opportunity to do this and I may need to instigate conversation or arrange the scenario with a friend	
Step 6: Record what happened when you carried out the experiment	
I was nervous and paused for a few seconds once or twice but I managed to think of things to say and keep the conversation going	
Step 7: What can you learn from this? How much do you believe your original prediction?	
Although I am nervous in conversations with people I do not know well, I can maintain a conversation. Belief I will clam up - 50%	

From the behavioural experiment Sally found that she could cope with meeting new people better than she originally predicted. She started to attend more social events, she even pushed herself to go to a society social without her friends. She found that she enjoyed this and now goes each week.



But what if my original prediction is supported by the findings of the experiment?

A

Is there another explanation for what happened?

For example, if Sally found it difficult to drop her safety behaviours and she sat in the corner and avoided eye contact with anyone then this could have been the reason no one came over and spoke to her.

B

What else was happening at that time?

For example, did Sally have anything else going on which might have effected the outcome? E.g. she might have been ill that night or she might have had a deadline the next day.

C

Are there other ways of viewing what happened?

How would someone else view this outcome? What would a friend say about this if you talked them through it?

D

What could I learn from the experience to improve or change things in the future?

If there were certain things which affected the outcome, then how can you stop this from happening again in the future? Were there any other safety behaviours that you noticed that you could try and stop next time?

Behavioural Experiment Worksheet

Step 1: Negative thought or belief to be tested	How much do you believe this prediction ? (0-100%)
Step 2: What is an alternative prediction?	How much do you believe this prediction ? (0-100%)
Step 3: Experiment design– What will you do to test the prediction? Where? When? For how long? With whom?	
Step 4: What safety behaviours would you need to drop?	
Step 5: What things may get in your way? How will you overcome these?	
Step 6: Record what happened when you carried out the experiment	
Step 7: What can you learn from this? How much to you believe your original prediction?	

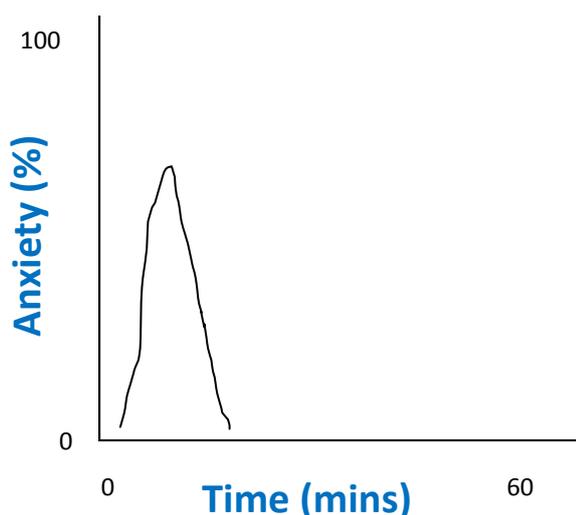
Avoidance, escaping and anxiety

As we saw from the vicious cycle of anxiety and safety behaviours, how we respond to situation can be a strong factor that maintains anxiety. The fight or flight response tells us that there is something dangerous to respond to, so it's only natural that we would want to escape or avoid the perceived 'threat'. However, when the threat isn't physical, escaping or avoiding it can actually maintain the vicious cycle of anxiety.

I feel really anxious when I'm in big open spaces where there are lots of people. All I think is "I need to get out of here" I try and leave as fast as possible or avoid them all together if possible.



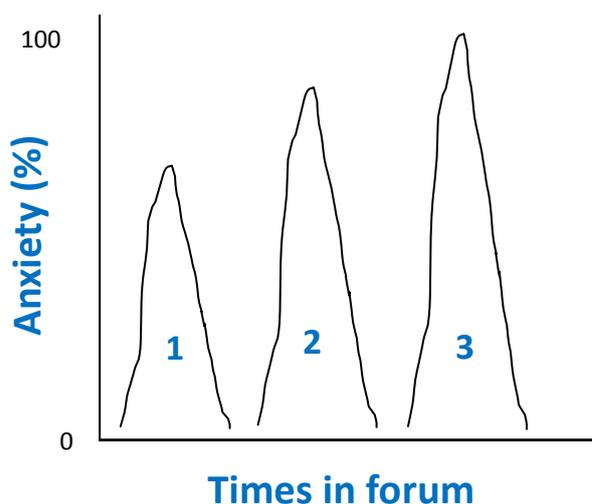
Escaping



The Escaping graph shows what happens to your anxiety when you avoid and escape a feared situation. For Sally this would show her experience of going in the forum at lunch time. When she enters the forum her anxiety peaks really quickly. This feels so horrible that Sally gets out of there as quick as she can. When she leaves the forum she experiences a huge relief as the anxiety comes down. What she then remembers is the anxiety she felt in the forum and the relief she felt when she left.

The Escaping and Anxiety graph shows how over time avoiding and escaping the feared situation can actually increase anxiety. The graph to the right shows that when you escape a feared situation all you remember is how horrible you felt when you were in the situation and how relieved you felt when you got away. This means the next time you are in the same situation, the anxiety is worse than before and the desire to get away is even stronger. This is how phobias develop. Avoiding the situation means although we escape the anxiety temporarily, the situation will continue to trigger a strong reaction.

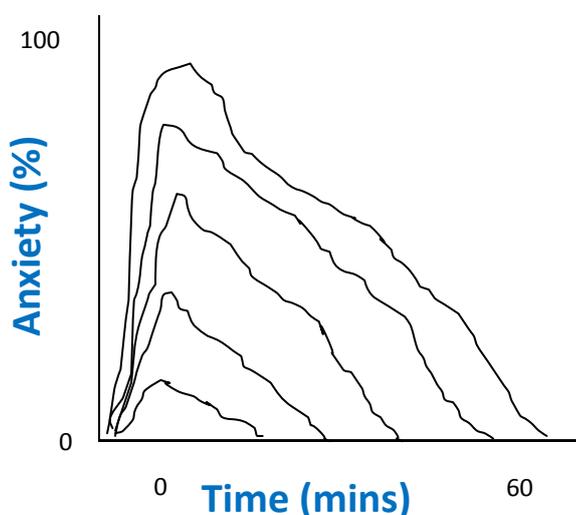
Escaping and anxiety



Tackling avoidance to overcome anxiety

Research has found that by tackling avoidance in a gradual, controlled and systematic way you can dramatically reduce the anxiety associated with a particular situation or object. This technique is called 'exposure therapy'. The idea of this may sound scary but we will go through how the process can be broken down to make it manageable. The graphs below show how exposure therapy works.

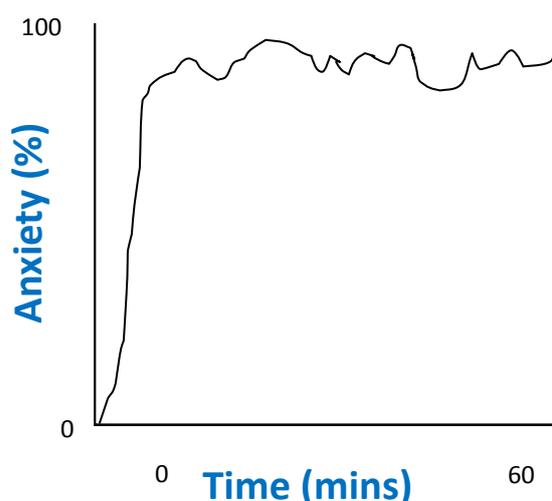
Exposure



The vicious cycle of anxiety can be broken by exposure to the feared situation. If we remain in the situation without escaping or distracting ourselves, our anxiety will start to come down on its own as our adrenaline response reduces. This process is called habituation. We then need to repeat this process for the initial feeling of anxiety to reduce each time. The initial anxiety we experience and the time it takes for us to habituate should decrease with each exposure.

Often when we face a situation that makes us feel anxious we try and make ourselves feel safer by distracting ourselves or doing certain things to reduce the anxiety. Although this can help in the short term, it also brings our attention back to the belief that the situation presents a threat. The fight or flight response then continues rather than reduces. Many people have tried to face their fears, however unless we experience the anxiety (as horrible as it can be) we won't habituate. If we distract ourselves the next time we are in the situation our anxiety will be as high as it had been previously.

Distraction



Facing situations that cause you anxiety can be a really difficult to do. To make exposure more manageable it can be approached in a gradual, graded way.

4 Principals that make exposure effective

1 Graded

Rank activities according to the amount of anxiety provoked by the object or situation, starting with the easiest and finishing with the hardest. Then plan exposure exercises in a graded way using the activities on the list. For exposure to be effective you need to experience the anxiety reducing whilst you are in the situation. For this to happen you need to expose yourself to situations which cause you at least 60% anxiety when you first go into them. The higher up the list you can start, the quicker you will break the cycle of anxiety.

2 Prolonged

You need to remain in the situation until your anxiety has reduced by at least half. The time this takes can vary from person to person, you should initially allow yourself a few hours for exposure exercises. Your anxiety will reduce quicker with each exposure exercise. If you don't stay in the situation long enough for your anxiety to come down then you won't feel a reduction in anxiety the next time you are in that situation. If anything it might even be worse.

3 Repeated

You also need to repeat the same exercise 3-5 times a week, the more you do it the quicker your anxiety will come down in that situation. Each time you repeat it you should notice a decrease in the initial anxiety you feel until you no longer find the situation fearful. Once you find your anxiety before you go into the situation reduce by at least 50% you can move onto the next activity on your hierarchy.

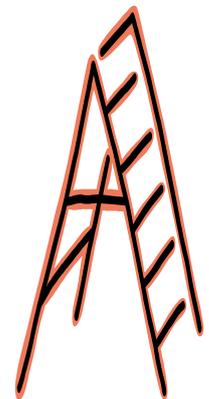
4 Without distraction

You need to fully feel the sensations of anxiety rather than distracting your mind from it or by doing things which make you feel safer. If you distract yourself then you will notice an effect similar to the 'distraction' graph. Rather than your anxiety reducing over time, you are constantly reminding yourself that the situation presents a threat and not learning that your anxiety will come down on its own, without doing anything else. It also means that the next time you are in that situation your anxiety will be just as high rather than it reducing. Distracting yourself from the anxiety keeps the vicious cycle of going!

Creating a hierarchy: Making it graded

Sally created a hierarchy for the situations that make her anxious which you can see below. First, she noted down the situations that caused her anxiety, then she identified which situation she would find most difficult and which she would find least difficult. Finally she put these into her hierarchy sheet and rated how anxious each situation would make her feel.

	<i>Situation</i>	<i>Anxiety Rating (0-100)</i>
Most Difficult	Town centre on a Saturday lunch time	90%
	Town centre on a week day lunch time	85%
	The forum around lunch time outside the market place	83%
	The forum at 3:00pm	70%
	Town centre at 5:00pm	72%
Least Difficult	Walking a different route back to my halls	68%
	Sitting in the park on my own	60%



It helps to consider nuances in the situation which affect your anxiety level – e.g. who is around at the time, how far you are from the feared object/activity, whether the time of day makes any difference. For Sally, the forum and town were more difficult when they were busier, e.g. at lunch time and on weekends.

Your hierarchy

Note down all the situations or objects which make you feel anxious. Start with the most difficult and work towards the least difficult. As we said before, be sure to consider nuances in the situation which affect your anxiety level – e.g. who is around at the time, how far you are from the feared object/activity.

	Situation	Anxiety Rating (0-100)
Most Difficult		
Medium Difficulty		
Least Difficult		



Setting up exposure exercises

It's really useful to plan exposure exercises on a weekly basis starting with the activity on the hierarchy that you feel able to do. Plan several times in advance when it would be possible to carry out the exercises. Rate anxiety as a percentage before (when you start to prepare for the exercise e.g. getting your coat or bag to go out), at the start (when you are in the situation) and at the end of the exercise (when your anxiety has reduced by half). Leave the duration box blank initially and fill this in after finishing the exercise with how long it took for your anxiety to reduce by at least half.

REMEMBER: You need to stay in the situation until your anxiety at the start of the exercise reduces by half, but the larger the reduction in anxiety, the easier it will be next time and the quicker the exposure process, so the longer you can stay in the situation the better!

Sally decided to start exposure by walking a different route back to her halls, she felt she would be able to manage this. At the start of the week she planned in a few exposure exercises, including what she was going to do, when she would do it and where it would take place. She then started to complete the exercises and recorded what happened to her anxiety on the exposure exercise worksheet. She could see from her ratings that her anxiety did reduce when she repeatedly exposed herself to a different route home.



Exercise	Time+ Date	Duration	Anxiety Rating 0-100			Comments
			Before the Exercise	Start of Exercise	After the Exercise	
Walk home via the tennis courts	Sat 1pm	1 hour 45 minutes	50	60	30	Felt v anxious initially but did get better
As above	Sun 3pm	1 hour	40	55	25	
As above	Wed 7pm	45 mins	38	50	22	Anxiety starting to go down quicker

Exposure Exercise Worksheet

Exercise	Time & Date	Duration	Anxiety Rating 0-100			Comments			
			Before the Exercise	Start of Exercise	After the Exercise				

Staying well

Well done on getting to the end of Anxiety Busting! It can be helpful to look back over the weeks you have been working on these techniques and think about what has been the most helpful. There is no way of knowing if anxiety will be a problem for you again in the future, but hopefully working through this booklet has equipped you with some ways of coping if you do feel that way again.

What have you learned?

Which techniques have worked best for you?

What are your signs of anxiety? (Thoughts / feelings / behaviours)

What areas are you going to work on?

What techniques will you use to do this?

Setting yourself goals to continue working towards...



Sometimes it can be really helpful to think about what you want to continue working towards in the near future. There might be things that you have made a good start on whilst working through Anxiety Busting, or maybe there are other areas of your life where you feel setting a goal would be helpful. Either way, having a clear goal that you can measure and assess can really help you have a clear direction. It may also be helpful to give yourself a day a week or a month to look through this booklet again and to re-assess where you are with achieving your goals.

Today's date:

Goal One:

I can do this now (circle a number)

0 (not at all) 1 2 (occasionally) 3 4 (Often) 5 6 (Anytime)

Today's date:

Goal Two:

I can do this now (circle a number)

0 (not at all) 1 2 (occasionally) 3 4 (Often) 5 6 (Anytime)

Emergency support services

It is relatively common when people are feeling stressed or low to have thoughts that they would be better off dead or to hurt themselves in some way. These may just be brief passing thoughts or reflect a sense of feeling trapped, but without any intention to do anything.

On the other hand, some people find themselves thinking about death a lot, or having thoughts about ending their lives. They may have even had thoughts about how they might kill themselves or have a plan to end their life. If any of these cases are true for you, we strongly urge you to talk to someone about these thoughts.

If you are having suicidal thoughts, please contact one of the services listed below. These services are available to help you during this difficult period.

During office hours you can contact:

Your GP to make an urgent appointment with a doctor. In an emergency, the GPs at the Student Health Centre on Streatham Campus can also see students who do not have a GP in Exeter

The Wellbeing Centre also offers daily duty appointments that can be booked at short notice - these can be booked by contacting the reception on 01392 724381

Out of hours you can contact:

Devon doctors – For urgent support when your surgery is closed call 111

The Samaritans – a confidential service and support for anyone in crisis - 01392 411 711 or www.samaritans.org.uk

Voice - a listening service run by students – available from 8pm to 8am every night during term time - 01392 724000 - www.exetervoice.co.uk

A&E You can also attend **A&E** for emergency support at any time

If you are having thoughts to self-harm a useful self-help booklet is:

Northumberland self help website: Self help: Self harm

Well done for working through Anxiety Busting!

It is worth keeping an eye on how you feel, it is perfectly normal to experience anxiety sometimes. But we also know that anxiety problems can return. If you find that you have been feeling anxious for a while then you should try to do something about it. The important thing is that you have learnt some skills that you can use to keep yourself feeling well and to tackle any anxiety if it does return.

You might feel as though you're still not where you want to be in terms of your anxiety. This is completely normal, it can take time for these techniques to reverse the vicious cycle of anxiety. If you found that they have made any difference at all, even if its small, this is encouraging. Just keep up the good work and as time goes on you will notice it getting easier. Further Cognitive Behaviour Therapy might also be helpful.

It can be helpful to schedule in a day a month where you can focus on YOU! Where you can have a look back through this booklet to remind yourself on the different techniques and focus activities that are enjoyable and don't involve any stress. If you schedule it in you'll be more likely to do it, these things can easily get lost or forgotten about otherwise.

