

Anxiety is one of many feelings we have.

Anxiety can be experienced as :

- * a **feeling**, like fear or dread in our **bodies**, tense, shaky, feeling sick
- * how we **think**, “what if “ & “ I won’t cope” sorts of thoughts.
- * what we **do**. Don’t go to places that we used to

Anxiety can be helpful , for example if we didn’t worry about doing well in exams we may not be bothered to revise. If we were not worried about getting hurt by a car when crossing roads , we may not wait, look and listen carefully before crossing. So anxiety can serve us well to keep us safe and do our best.

However too much anxiety can stop us from doing the things we need and want to. It can make us think of the worst thing that could happen in a situation. For example it may stop someone going out with friends as they worry they may say something wrong , or will not go on a train in case it crashes.

Anxiety tends to make us focus on the worst things that could happen in a situation. So we are not being reasonable as to how likely something bad will happen.

Anxiety also makes us focus on how we wont be able to cope. But this is not true , we all have things we can do to help us cope.

Anxiety can be summarised like this :

OVERESTIMATE HOW OFTEN THE THREAT WILL HAPPEN

ANXIETY = -----

UNDERESTIMATE OUR ABILITY TO COPE

How often is the threat ? How can we gather information to tell us if we worried for good reason or no reason ?

We can write down how many times we have completed the feared activity before. Then we can then write down how many times the worst feared thing happened in that activity in all of those experiences. Getting this down on paper can help us to see the thing we feared has happened but no where near as often as the times it didn’t happen! This helps us to be more realist about how often the worst thing happens.

Can you COPE?

When we experience worry time and time again our physical responses and actions can become like a habit. We may not want to avoid a situation but just don’t know any other way to cope.

The first step is to accept that becoming anxious in certain situations is normal for you. If we know some situations give us worry we can learn to expect that to happen.

That might seem a difficult thing to accept, but it is very important. Often we are surprised when anxiety comes, that makes it more powerful and terrifying. But if we learn to expect it, it becomes predictable. When things are predictable we can start planning how we respond and cope.

When we start to list all the things we can do to help ourselves in the feared situation we pay attention to our strengths in that situation . These are often ignored by us. We are not helpless, but we might have felt we were. Writing the coping skills down , with support, makes it easier to notice them and the list can be used as a guide when in the feared situation. We can add new skills as we think about more. This can boost our confidence.

When you start to tackle anxiety its very important to start with very small steps. It is also important to remember we will need to do things that are not normal to us. This is tough so praise from others for our effort is vital. Not just for the successes.

On the accompanying sheet there are some resources that help you to understand more about anxiety and make a stepped plan of how to tackle it.

To summarise :

Did you know?

We all have feelings and emotions, sometimes they can be very strong and overwhelm us!

As humans our brains are hotwired to experience anxiety !

In this way we can say that anxiety is normal in **ALL** of us - to help keep us safe

However, when anxiety becomes overwhelming and affects us physically and also our behaviour and thoughts

IT'S TIME TO ASK OURSELVES:

What is happening to my body?

Is there a change in my behaviour?

What am I thinking about too much?

ANXIETY

It is **NOT OK** to hurt other people, animals, property or yourself when you have strong feelings



You have choices !

Give yourself some time

We know what helps reduce Anxiety:

Be aware of your breathing, take deep breaths

Grounding Techniques:
Concentrate on
5 things that you can see
4 things that you can hear
3 things that you can feel
2 things that you can smell
1 thing that you can taste

Drink more water - avoid fizzy drinks and caffiene

Good sleep patterns

Healthy Eating

Avoid negative thoughts and self put downs

Keep active - take exercise or do something you like

Talk to friends and family - they will have experienced anxiety as well

When all the above doesn't seem to be reducing your anxiety, seek **HELP** from your school or GP Surgery