

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough **NHS**

Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust

A Cambridge University Teaching Trust

# Coping with Anxiety

**Primary Care Psychological Treatment Service  
Cambridge & Peterborough Mental Health Trust (Cambridge)**

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## **Introduction**

Most people experience anxiety at various points in their day to day lives. It is the emotion we feel when we feel scared or threatened by a situation and perceive that we may not be able to deal with it effectively. Taking an important exam, going to a job interview and making a public speech are some of the common things people often report feeling anxious about. Usually as the situation passes, the persons anxiety drops. Their anxiety comes and goes like a wave with the various pressures that they face in their life, and they are able to manage this.

For some people though their anxiety never seems to go away; it is always there regardless of the situation. Or for some people their anxiety reaches such intense levels that it begins to significantly interfere with their daily life and they feel that they can no longer cope. It can feel less like riding a wave and more like being stuck in the middle of a storm. This can be confusing and frightening and the person may start to think that it will never get any better, leading to them feeling depressed.

This manual is designed to help you to understand anxiety. It explains patterns that can keep anxiety going and practical skills you can use to break these patterns. As you go through the manual it may be helpful to think of the patterns as whirlpools that make it very difficult to explain the “storm”, and the skills that you learn as your “paddle” which, with effort and practice, will help you row yourself to a calmer and happier place.

## **About Anxiety**

### **2.1 What is Anxiety?**

Anxiety is a normal aspect of human experience and includes the feeling of being nervous, on edge or frightened. Although unpleasant, the emotion of anxiety is harmless and serves to warn and protect us when we are in danger. For example, most of us would feel a bit anxious standing on the edge of a cliff without any barriers to prevent us from falling over. The anxiety would motivate many of us to move away from the edge or take extreme caution while remaining on the edge. These behaviours make it less likely that we will fall off the cliff. Without the anxiety, we would not take the same precautions and would be more likely to place ourselves in danger or respond inappropriately to dangerous situations. Therefore, anxiety helps us survive; and in order to do this, the emotion is unpleasant, otherwise we might not take any notice of our body's natural alarm system.

Anxiety not only warns us of danger, but also prepares our body to respond to the danger. This preparation includes breathing more quickly to get more oxygen to our muscles; increased heart beat to get more blood to the muscles; increased muscle tension to be able to react quickly; more sweat to cool down the body in anticipation of physical exertion. Also our minds focus on the source of the threat. These physical changes occur as the body prepares to respond to the danger; and enable us to react to threatening situations. These responses have evolved over millions of years to protect us. Even though they may feel very extreme, they are normal responses. The problem with anxiety arises when people see things as very dangerous when the actual level of

danger is quite small. Our minds and bodies react and we experience anxiety despite the fact that the situation is relatively safe.

To summarise, anxiety is a normal, harmless and essential aspect of living. Anxiety itself cannot do you any physical harm. However, it can be a problem when it occurs in situations where the perceived danger is much greater than the actual danger. In these situations anxiety can begin to have a major impact on peoples lives.

### **The Iceberg Analogy**

Think of a ship sailing through Arctic waters. The ship's radar scans the seas for icebergs. When an iceberg is detected, the captain steers a course into safe waters. The radar rarely sees danger where none exists. The captain has faith in his radar, feels in control of his ship and experiences little anxiety.

We all have a 'radar' that scans for danger. The problem is that, once anxiety gets a grip of you, your radar is much too sensitive and you can no longer trust it. It detects danger when no real danger exists. You are seeing 'icebergs' everywhere. As a direct result, because you see so many icebergs, you cannot see any safe water to steer towards. This "hypersensitised" radar effectively blinds you, leaving you feeling powerless to escape danger.

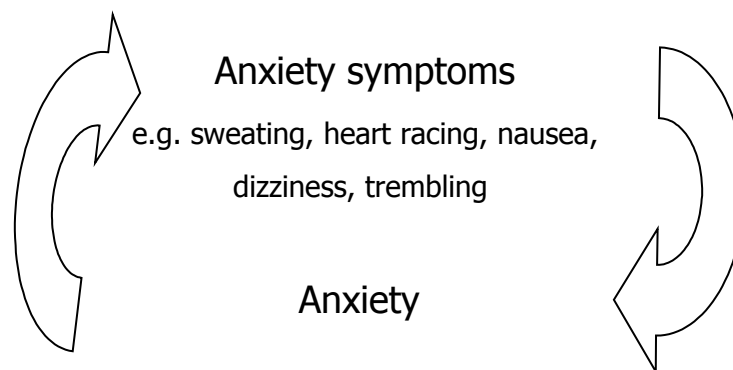
## **2.2 How does anxiety make you feel?**

**"I find it hard to breathe. I get hot and sweaty, and I feel as though I want to run away."**

**“It feels like my heart is going to burst. My chest feels full and tight and I can feel my heart beating all through my body. I feel it pounding in my ears and head.”**

Anxiety can produce a number of bodily sensations or symptoms such as muscle tension, sweating trembling, breathing fast, “butterflies in the stomach” feeling sick, having diarrhoea, headache, backache or an irregular or racing heart beat, etc.

The bodily feelings of anxiety are frightening. They may make you think that there is something physically wrong or that you are in real danger. Worrying that you could be ill or that something terrible may happen could cause more anxiety. This in turn may bring on even more of the bodily feelings. This produces a vicious circle like the one below.



Not everyone experiences this vicious circle. Answering the questions below might help you to decide whether you do.

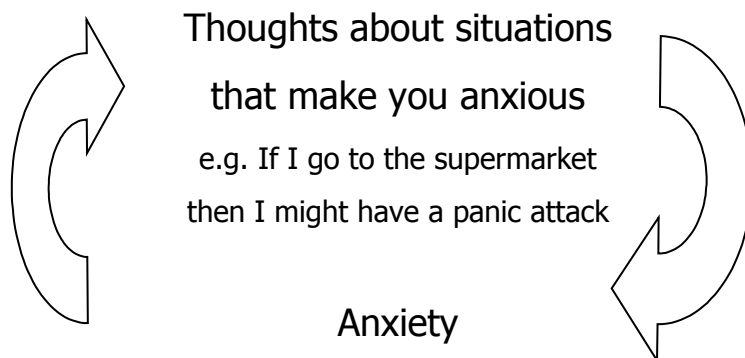
- Which symptoms do you experience when you get anxious?
- Do any of these symptoms cause you concern?
- What do you think might happen when you get these symptoms?

### **2.3 The role of thoughts in anxiety**

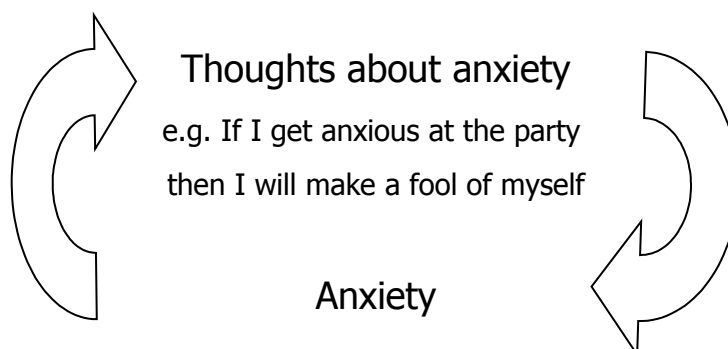
**“When I’ve done the shopping I worry that I’ve spent too much and then I can’t sleep. My nerves get on edge and things go round and round in my head.”**

**“Even before I start to do it , I start to worry. I go over and over it in my mind and I know I won’t cope. I know I’ll panic. By the time I have to go there, I’ve got myself into a state.”**

Thinking is important because often situations which need not necessarily cause us anxiety can do so if we think about them in the wrong way. For example, imagine a woman lying in bed at night in an empty house. Her husband is away on a business trip and not due back until the next day. Suddenly she hears a rattling noise at the back door. Now she might think, ‘Oh good, my husband’s come back early, how nice!’ Or she might think, ‘Oh no, it’s someone trying to get into the house, they’ll attack me, they’ll take everything’. In the first case she might feel happy and pleased, in the second case she is likely to feel very anxious indeed, but the situation in both cases is the same. In other words, it is not (always) the situation that makes you anxious, it is the way that you see it! Anxious people often think that they will not be able to cope with the situations which they find difficult, and these thoughts often make them feel even more anxious and tense. This can create another vicious circle.



You may also find that you start to expect that you are going to feel anxious. You start to anticipate your own anxiety. Worrying about becoming anxious can actually bring on anxiety, producing another vicious circle.



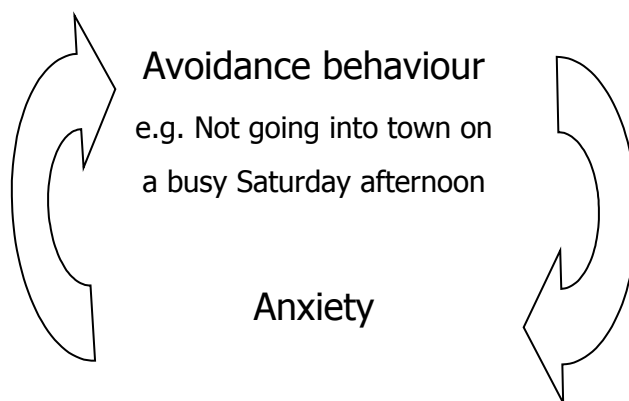
Try answering the questions below to see whether these vicious circles apply to you.

- Do you feel like you are constantly expecting the worst to happen?
- Are there times when you become anxious just thinking about doing something?
- Does the anticipation of an event sometimes seem worse than the actual event?

#### 2.4 The role of behaviour in anxiety

**“A year ago I began to worry about getting onto crowded buses so I persuaded my son to take me shopping in the car. I haven’t been on the bus for six months and I don’t think I could do it now. I’m trapped, I can’t get out without my son.”**

Behaviour is important because when we are anxious we naturally want to get away from the difficult situation as quickly as possible. We feel better as soon as we are away, and this reinforces our desire never to go back to the situation again. We start to avoid that situation, and soon avoid anything that reminds us of it. The more we avoid, the less able we are to deal with anxiety and the more we give ourselves the message that we are right to be afraid. This is the case even when we avoid things in a subtle way, by taking drugs to cope, or only doing something with a friend or partner.



Do you think that this vicious circle might apply to you? Again, try answering the questions below if you are unsure.

- Have you been avoiding any situations?
- Are there any things which you have stopped doing since you became anxious?

## 2.5 Goals and practice

The first step is to set yourself goals for therapy. This will help you to focus on the achievements which you have made. You can look back on your goals as you work through the manual. When setting your goals ask yourself; what would I like to be different in my life when I finish therapy? Which aspects of my life has anxiety had the biggest impact upon? If I weren't anxious what would I like to do?

It is helpful to specify goals in a very precise way, so that you know when you have achieved them. So a goal like "Not to feel so anxious when I go out" is probably not so helpful as "To be able to go to the supermarket on my own".

**My Therapy Goals**

➤

➤

➤

If all this looks a bit scary don't worry. This manual will show you ways to tackle each of these vicious circles. However this therapy will only work if you practice. The main part of treatment will be carried out by you at home. Each section contains homework and advice on techniques which you can practice. You may not need to go through every section. If you are not using this manual with the assistance of a

therapist then you may want use the questions in each of the sections above to help you to decide which areas you need to focus on. The important thing is to practice the techniques so that you can apply them throughout your life. Progress and practice go hand in hand. Progress may seem slow to begin with but each small step will help you to gain confidence in your ability to be your own therapist. Each time you achieve something it is a success. Small successes turn into larger successes. Praise yourself for all of them. Make a habit of giving yourself a mental pat on the back. Get someone else to notice your achievements, tell your husband, wife or friend about your success.

### **Managing the physical symptoms of anxiety**

If you find that the symptoms of anxiety are very intense, or that the symptoms cause you a lot of concern, then the following techniques may be of particular use to you. These techniques are specifically designed to work on the bodily sensations which anxiety causes. As we saw in the section “How does anxiety make you feel?” these symptoms can form a vicious circle increasing anxiety. By working to manage the symptoms we can begin to break through that vicious circle and reduce the overall anxiety.

#### **3.1 Controlled breathing**

People often breath faster or harder (that is they hyperventilate) when they are very anxious. One of the problems in stress is that the threats you are worrying about are not ones that you can physically fight or run away from. Yet the fight or flight response prepares you for physical exertion. As a result of this you are left with energy in the shape of oxygen that you cannot quickly burn up. Normally there is a delicate balance between Oxygen and Carbon Dioxide in the brain. Subtle changes can offset this balance and result in unpleasant symptoms including:

- Tingling face, hands or limbs;
- Muscle tremors or cramps;

- Dizziness and visual problems;
- Difficulty breathing;
- Exhaustion and feelings of fatigue; and
- Chest and stomach pains.

Note that the symptoms listed are directly caused by hyperventilation and are very similar to the symptoms people describe when they have a panic attack or feel very anxious. If you are hyperventilating, counteracting this will help in reducing these symptoms.

Controlled breathing is one way to counteract the symptoms of incorrect breathing. You can easily learn to correct over-breathing, which involves learning to breathe gently and evenly, through your nose, filling your lungs completely and then exhaling slowly and fully. Controlled breathing may not be the answer for everyone, but we will only know if you practice regularly.

### LEARNING CONTROLLED BREATHING

Use your lungs fully and avoid breathing from your upper chest alone. Breathing should be a smooth action, without any gulping or gasping. When you first practice, it can be easier to do this exercise lying down, so that you can better feel the difference between shallow and deep breathing. As you become more practised, you can try this exercise sitting or standing.

- Place one hand on your chest and one on your stomach.
- As you breath in through your nose, allow your stomach to swell. This will mean that you are using your lungs fully. Try to keep the movement in your upper chest to a minimum and keep the movement gentle.
- Slowly and evenly, breathe out through your nose.
- Repeat this, trying to get a rhythm going. You are aiming to take eight to twelve breaths a minute: breathing in and breathing out again counts as one breath. This might be difficult to gauge at first, so practice counting five to seven seconds for a complete breathing cycle (breathing in and out).
- You will know when you are doing it right because the hand on your stomach will be moving up and down much more than the hand on your chest.

### 3.2 Applied Relaxation

Under stress, the muscles in our bodies tense, and muscular tension causes uncomfortable sensations such as headache, stiff neck, painful shoulders, tight chest and difficulty in breathing. The most effective way of controlling bodily tension is learning how to relax in response to tension. Applied relaxation means developing a skill which enables you to reduce physical tension whenever you need to.

Relaxation techniques can help you become generally more calm and to lower your overall level of anxiety. With practice, you will become more sensitive to how tense or relaxed your muscles are; this will enable you to recognise tension earlier, which will mean that you can then do something about it. Relaxation is a technique that takes practice. It is a good idea to practice relaxation at least twice a day, for about 30 minutes at a time (the procedure need not take longer than 10-20 minutes, but allow yourself 30 so that you know that there is no need to worry).

Relaxation is something to do be done alone and when you are expecting no interruptions. Sit or lie down in a comfortable place (a bed or a sofa are good examples). It will be helpful if the room is relaxing – warm and pleasantly lit. If you find a piece of favourite music soothing, use it as a soft background to your relaxation. If too much silence puts you on edge, leave the radio on at a low volume – preferably to a music station. Try to adopt a ‘passive attitude’, which means not worrying about your performance or whether you are successfully relaxing. Just ‘have a go’ and let it happen.

Remove your shoes and loosen tight clothing. Start by taking a couple of deep breaths. Allow yourself to be still for a few minutes to help you get in the right frame of mind and allow yourself to start to unwind. Focus on your breathing, and let your muscles slowly start to relax.

Focus your attention on your hands and arms. Tighten the muscles in this area, and notice what it feels like when these muscles are tight and tense. Hold this for about 10 seconds. Then relax the muscles in your hands and arms – let the muscles become floppy and limp. Concentrate on the changes in sensation in your muscles from the tense state to the relaxed state. Focus on the feelings of relaxation in your hand and arm.

Then move on to other muscles groups. Tighten and release each of these groups of muscles, one at a time:

- Feet, calves, thighs

- Buttocks, stomach, back
- Shoulder, neck
- Jaw, eyes, scalp

Once you have gone through each of the muscle groups, tensing and relaxing, turn your attention back to your breathing. Focus on filling your lungs, and letting the air out through your mouth as slowly as you can. Continue to breathe slowly and regularly and notice the rhythm – like wavelets, running onto and receding from a beach. While you are lying quietly, focus again on your body. Go through the muscle groups and check to see if your muscles have remained relaxed. It is not unusual for some muscles to have tensed up while you have been relaxing others. If you notice any tension at all, focus on relaxing that area. Let the muscles go loose and limp.

When you are satisfied that you are physically relaxed and that your breathing is deep and regular, let your feelings of relaxation continue to deepen. There is no hurry – just enjoy the comfort.

Sometimes people can use this time to imagine a fantasy scene in their mind – one in which they are completely calm, content, and relaxed. If you like, build a relaxing fantasy in your mind. Pay great attention to detail, using all of your senses in turn –

What can you see?

What can you hear?

What can you smell?

What can you feel?

What can you taste?

When you are ready to stop practising, count backwards from 5 to 0, and then open your eyes. Take a deep breath, stretch, and get up very slowly. Take your time and notice how relaxed you feel.

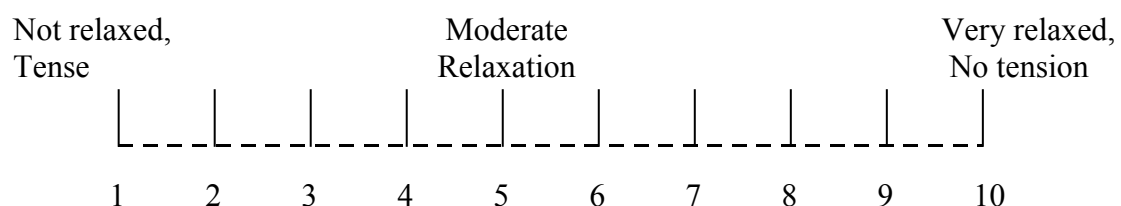
You may find that relaxation is difficult at first. You may not find it easy to relax your muscles, or you may have trouble concentrating on relaxing. This is why it is important to practice relaxation techniques – it takes time and practice to be able to relax effectively. If you practice twice a day, you will start to notice that it becomes easier to relax, and that you can become more relaxed more quickly. When you feel ready, you can reduce the amount of time you spend practising and use your skills whenever you feel you need them. With practice, you will become better at noticing when your muscles are tense, and will be able to relax them on-the-spot, without having to tense them first. This is a useful technique to use when you feel yourself getting nervous.

Use the relaxation diary on the next page to help you and your therapist to discover where and when you are best able to relax, and to monitor your progress.

**Tip-** If you are having difficulty knowing when to apply relaxation technique in your daily life try filling in the tension chart in the next section. This chart will help you to spot any patterns in your experience of tension, making you aware of the times when relaxation may be helpful.

### Relaxation diary

Before doing the relaxation exercise rate how relaxed you are feeling according to the scale given below. After completing the exercise rate your level of relaxation again. You should also make notes about how you got on with the exercise.



Time and place	Relaxation level before exercise	Relaxation level after exercise	Comments

### 3.3 Tension Chart

Some people have difficulty applying relaxation techniques to their everyday lives. This is because being tense has become a habit and people are not always able to spot their tension. This may be a particular problem when anxiety is high and your mind is focused on anxious thoughts rather than on looking out for feelings of tension. You may find it helps to practice spotting when your muscles are tense. This will help firstly by increasing your ability to spot tension, but also by making you aware of any situations in which you are more likely to feel tense.

Use the chart below to help you see where and when you get tense. Write in the situations when you have noticed different muscles becoming tense.

### **Managing your anxious thoughts**

- ◆ Breathing
  
- ◆ Hands
  
- ◆ Arms
  
- ◆ Shoulders
  
- ◆ Neck
  
- ◆ Forehead
  
- ◆ Jaw
  
- ◆ Chest
  
- ◆ Stomach
  
- ◆ Back
  
- ◆ Legs

In the section “The role of thoughts in anxiety” we looked at vicious circles which can be formed when a person is having lots of anxious thoughts. This section will help you to break through those vicious circles by looking at ways to help you think about your problems in a more constructive and reassuring manner.

#### **4.1 Challenging anxious thoughts and images**

The technique of challenging requires you to recognise an anxious thought and ask yourself ‘Is this a realistic concern?’ If it isn’t a realistic concern, you need to replace it with a constructive statement. When you are aware of your tension rising, ask yourself: ‘What is going through my mind?’ It is not always easy to recognise anxious thoughts and images, but with practice you will become better able to identify what is going through your mind.

Try using the table below to record your thoughts when you feel your anxiety rising.

Situation	What were you thinking about?	How did this make you feel?

The next step is to try to evaluate whether or not your concerns are realistic and in proportion. At the time of feeling anxious or worried, you might not be able to spot irrational thinking patterns or predictions; if that is the case, look at your record later, when you are feeling calm and more able to view the situation clearly. If you still have difficulty in gaining a realistic perspective, ask your therapist (or a trusted friend) to help you to look through your diary entries and to comment on the accuracy of your perceptions and predictions.

Once you have started to see that your thoughts may be a bit “irrational”, you can begin to find constructive alternatives to them. Challenging your anxious thinking will make you feel less anxious and better able to cope with difficulties.

There are five questions you should ask yourself in order to generate a more confident way of thinking:

- Are there reasons *for* my having this anxious thought?
- Are there reasons *against* my having this thought?
- What is the worst that could happen?
- How could I cope with this?
- What is a more constructive way of viewing the situation?

On the next page you will find an example of how these questions can be and a page for you to have a go yourself.

There are extra copies of the forms at the back of this manual so that you can keep practising catching your anxious thoughts and then challenging them. Remember the more you practice the easier it will get.

### Challenging in action

Thought: 'Sara is late for our meeting. She might have had a car crash and have been injured.'

*Are there reasons for my having this anxious thought?* Yes, there are: I read about people being killed in road accidents and she is travelling on a main road where she could have an accident. So I am not being completely ridiculous.

*Are there reasons against my holding this thought?* Yes, there are: plenty of people use that road day in day out and never have an accident. The weather conditions today are very good for driving and so an accident is even less likely than usual. Even if Sara were in an accident, she need not be badly hurt - quite a few of my friends have had accidents and experienced very minor injuries, if any. There are road works on the road she uses - they could account for her being late.

*What is the worst that could happen?* The worst thing is that she has had an accident and is injured.

*How could I cope with this?* This would be a difficult situation for me, but I could get my husband to support me. We could contact the accident services at the hospital to find out how badly she'd been hurt. I would want to visit and could take my husband with me. I would tell myself that she will be well looked after in the hospital.

*What is a more constructive way of viewing the situation?* It is unlikely that Sara has had an accident and she's probably late because of road works. If she has had an accident, then she is not necessarily badly injured; and if she were, I could reassure myself that the hospital staff are the best people to deal with this and use my husband to support me if I am distressed.

Now think of a situation in which you have experienced anxiety in the past few weeks. Describe the situation then have a go at answering the same 5 questions.

Situation:

Anxious thought:

Are there reasons for my having this anxious thought?

Are there reasons against my holding this thought?

What is the worst that could happen?

How could I cope with this?

What is a more constructive way of viewing the situation?

## 4.2 Distraction

When you are anxious about something it is often difficult not to think about it. But these anxious thoughts end up making you feel worse. They keep the vicious circle of anxiety going. One way out of this is to try very hard to distract yourself so that you stop thinking!

As you know, it is very difficult just to turn your attention away from unpleasant feelings. There are two things you have to do:

- Decide not to think about them.
- Fill your mind with something else- distract yourself.

There are many ways in which you can distract yourself. Some of the activities you may find useful include:

**Concentrating on what is happening around you.** For example you could listen to someone else's conversation, or count how many different red things you can see. Choose something that engages your attention. When distracting yourself it helps to give yourself a specific task, like guessing what you would buy in each shop window.

**Mental activity.** This includes activities such as doing mental arithmetic, calculating prices, reciting a poem to yourself, or even doing a crossword puzzle. Try counting backwards from 1001 in 3s or 7s. See what effect this has!

**Physical activity.** Keeping yourself occupied can also distract you from your thoughts. Possible activities include doing the mending, washing the car, or taking the dog for a walk.

Have a go and experiment to find what works for you. Distraction is very useful as a short term “short-circuit” mechanism for controlling anxiety.

### **4.3 Worrying and Problem solving**

Everybody worries, it is a normal part of life. When working to overcome anxiety it is important to remember that worrying itself is not a problem, it is excessive worrying which can create difficulties. It can sometimes be hard to know how much is too much. Some people find it helps to set aside ‘a time to worry’. Set aside 30 minutes each day in which you will allow yourself to worry. This will not only allow you to keep your worrying down to a manageable level, but will also allow you to set aside worries as they present themselves throughout the day. You may find that it helps to keep a notebook with you so that you can write down your worries in preparation for your worry time later in the day.

You may find that by the time you reach your worry time some of the problems which you have set aside no longer seem so important, and you do not need to worry about them. Others may have resolved themselves over the course of the day. However some worries may remain, and you should spend the 30 minutes which have been set aside dealing with these. Some people find that they just need to go over their problem in their head. However, others find that thinking about their problems in a more structured way can be helpful. If you think you would like to try this look at the next section on problem solving.

### The six steps to problem solving

- *Define the problem.* Be specific about the task ahead and try not to confuse several tasks. Where possible, break the problem down into small separate bits. Small problems are easier to solve than big ones.
- *List solutions.* Think of as many ways of dealing with the problems as you can, without censoring your ideas. The more solutions you generate the better.
- *Evaluate the pros and cons of each solution.* Think about how practical the solutions are, how much help you will need to put them into action and how effective you think they are going to be. Rank your solutions in order of usefulness for you at this time.
- *Choosing a solution and planning to put it into action.* In very specific and concrete terms, decide how you are going to implement your chosen solution. Try to have contingency plans in place for if the task turns out to be more difficult than expected, e.g. is there someone you could ask to help you complete the task?
- *Do it.* Try out your solution making sure that you are properly prepared both physically and mentally.
- *Review the outcome.* If your solution works and is sufficient, congratulate yourself and remember this successful experience for the future. If your solution does not solve the problem, try to understand why it didn't - perhaps you were over ambitious, perhaps you were not feeling strong that day, perhaps you misjudged someone else's response to you. Learn as much as you can from the experience and go back to your solution list and select the next one.

## Overcoming avoidance

Avoiding or escaping from situations that make you anxious may help in the short term. But in the long term, the more you avoid something, the more frightened of it you become. Although this is exactly the opposite of what your instinct is telling you to do, you need to start overcoming the avoidance if your anxiety is going to get any better. This is what psychologists refer to as ‘exposure’ – exposing yourself to the feared situation. So here are some steps you can take.

- Make a list of the things you used to do that you would like to do again.

<b>List of activities I have been avoiding</b>	
➤	
➤	
➤	
➤	
➤	
➤	
➤	

- Give each activity on your list a mark out of 100 for how anxious it makes you, 1 being not at all anxious and 100 being incredibly anxious- could imagine nothing worse.

- Put them in order, with the one causing least anxiety first, and finish with the one that causes most anxiety. This is called a hierarchy.

<b>Hierarchy</b>	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	

- Spend a little bit of time doing the activity you put first on your hierarchy. Do this gently – for example, if you wanted to go for a walk, you may want to start with a five minute walk. When you feel comfortable, take a longer walk.
- Some people find this easiest if they first get the idea in their head and do it straight away. Others find it easier to plan exactly when and how they will carry it out.
- The secret of exposure is to keep at it. Initially things might seem very difficult indeed, but the more you do them, and the longer you stay in the feared situation, the more anxiety will wear off.

- After each activity give the activity a score for how anxiety provoking it was, compare this to the initial rating you gave to the activity.
- When you feel comfortable with that activity and it is no longer causing so much anxiety, move on to the next one on your list. Remember to ease yourself into it.
- Go through the list of activities, one by one.

Remember that to be effective, practice needs to be frequent, regular and prolonged:-  
**Frequent and regular** because if you leave long gaps between practice sessions you may lose the confidence and benefit you have achieved. Generally doing something each day is better than doing a lot one day, then nothing for a week.

**Prolonged** because *you will need to stay in a situation, even if you feel anxious, until your anxiety reduces*. This way you can relearn that nothing harmful will happen.

When doing your exposures remember the techniques which have been discussed throughout this manual. Use them to help manage your anxiety.

Overcoming your difficulties will be hard work, make you feel anxious at times, and perhaps make you wonder if avoiding your fears is the best solution after all. In this instance it may be helpful to ask yourself the following questions, “What is the worst that could happen if you go ahead?”, “What is worse than feeling anxious all the time?”.

## Handy tips

When you are feeling anxious, you sometimes forget to take good care of yourself. Here are just a few hints to help you to get back on track.

### 6.1 A Good Nights sleep

Many people have difficulty sleeping. Although this can leave you feeling a bit rough you should remember that you are probably functioning much better than you think. If you are having trouble sleeping try some of the tips below.

- Avoid over-the-counter sleeping medication. Only take sleeping medication as prescribed by your doctor. If you do take sleeping medication, remember that the best way to evaluate whether it is working is how you feel during the day, not whether it puts you to sleep.
- Set a standard bedtime and rising time. Your body operates on a sleep-wake cycle that works best when it is on a regular schedule. You will find it easier to fall asleep if you keep regular bed and rising times.
- Don't go to bed too early. It may seem like a good idea, but if you never fall asleep until midnight, then don't go to bed at 11 p.m. If you want to start falling asleep earlier, do it gradually. Start by going to bed about 30 minutes before you usually fall asleep. Once you are able to fall asleep at this time you can then start going to bed another 30 minutes earlier.
- Save your bedroom for sleep. If you can, avoid associating your bedroom with activities unrelated to sleep – like arguing, watching TV, doing work, exercising, talking on the phone, and so on. Sex, though, is fine.
- Create a good sleeping environment. Not too hot, not too cold. Nice and dark. Is noise a problem? Consider earplugs or devices that emit white noise (e.g., fans).
- Avoid napping during the day. Unless you can keep it to 20 minutes, a nap may make it harder for you to fall asleep at bedtime.
- Prepare for sleep. Avoid strenuous activity, exercise, heavy meals, and bright lights for at least an hour before going to bed.
- If you have a radio with a sleep setting, tune it in to a station without music (the shipping forecast is ideal, a news channel is not such a good idea). Set the radio to

a comfortable volume at which it is clearly audible but not loud enough to keep you awake then set the sleep setting for the radio to go off after 1 hour. Go to bed and listen to the radio, you should drift off to sleep before the radio switches off.

- Practice deep breathing or distraction strategies when attempting to fall asleep. Focusing on your worries or on how much you need to sleep will only keep you awake! Try to focus on something else, something more pleasant. If you can't stop worrying, sometimes making a list of your worries can help – remind yourself that you can address the problems on the list tomorrow.
- If you are struggling to get to sleep don't stay in bed. Get up and do something until you feel tired, then go back to bed.
- Are you a clock checker? It might help to turn your alarm clock around so that you can't see the time. Frequently checking the time is keeping you awake instead of letting you sleep!
- Remind yourself that everyone has a terrible night's sleep sometimes – don't get too stressed about it. People can very usually operate just fine the next day, even without a good night's sleep.
- You probably slept more than you think!! Research shows that people – especially those with difficulty sleeping – tend to underestimate how much sleep they actually get.

## 6.2 See the Positive

You may find that you are spending so much time worrying and focusing on your anxiety that you lose sight of the positive things in your life. To combat this, you need to start keeping track of the good things that happen in your life. This will allow you to develop a more fair, realistic, and positive view of yourself and your situation. Look back at your therapy goals, see how much closer you are to achieving them.

Tackling anxiety is hard work. You deserve to reward yourself for any accomplishments you make, or for any positive changes you notice in yourself – like changes in your thinking, behaviour, or mood. Sometimes a good reward is allowing yourself half an hour to do something for yourself, something that you really enjoy. Keep a record of any successes and positive changes you make (including efforts to

change) and the rewards you give yourself. Watch out for thoughts like “I don’t deserve a reward – this should be normal behaviour”.

### Summary and plans for the future

Hopefully by now you will have had the chance to practice some of the techniques in this manual. If you have not started seeing results immediately don't panic, remember it takes time and a lot of practice to enable you to manage your own anxiety. Once you have had chance to work on the techniques for a few weeks you should have a good idea of which ones work best for you. Write these in the box below. You can refer back to this page whenever you feel a little anxious in the future. Keep practising these techniques, remember the more you practice the better you will get.

<b>My top three techniques for combating anxiety</b>	
<b>1.</b>	
<b>2.</b>	
<b>3.</b>	

Situation	What were you thinking about?	How did this make you feel?

Situation:

Anxious thought:

Are there reasons for my having this anxious thought?

Are there reasons against my holding this thought?

What is the worst that could happen?

How could I cope with this?

What is a more constructive way of viewing the situation?

Situation:

Anxious thought:

Are there reasons for my having this anxious thought?

Are there reasons against my holding this thought?

What is the worst that could happen?

How could I cope with this?

What is a more constructive way of viewing the situation?

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