Manage Your Anxiety

warwick.ac.uk/anxiety

Noticing Anxiety? Which one of these could you try?

Relax yourself...

Physical relaxation

• Choose somewhere comfortable where you can relax (e.g. sit in a comfortable chair or lie on your bed).
• Choose a time when you will not be interrupted.
• Tense one of your muscles just enough to notice what it feels like (don’t over do it).
• For example, clench your fist, screw up your face muscles, scrunch your toes, hunch your shoulders.
• Hold the tension for about 3-5 seconds, then release.
• After you have tensed a muscle, try not to move it again.

Why it works: Relaxing your body sends a signal to your brain that you don’t need to worry. It also reduces muscle tension a common symptom of anxiety.

Regular Physical Exercise

• Regular exercise will help to manage stress and release tension.
• Aim to do at least 15 minutes of moderate exercise every day.
• Go for a short walk, jump on the spot, take the stairs, go running or swimming, cycle to campus, go back to a sport you have enjoyed, choose to try something new in Warwick sport.

Why it works: Exercise encourages your brain to release the chemical, serotonin, which can naturally improve your mood.

Focused Breathing

• Take in a nice deep breath.
• Breathe right down into your stomach, not just into the top of your lungs but right down into your diaphragm (you will feel your stomach muscles engage).
• Visualise a jug filling up from the bottom and getting full but not overflowing.
• It may feel a little uncomfortable if this is a new experience for you but stick with it.
• As you breathe out, imagine your stresses or worries leaving you with the breath.
• Keep going until you feel your stress begins to subside.

Why it works: Breathing deeply forces your body to relax and deactivates the body’s natural anxiety response.

Positive Imagery

• Close your eyes and take a deep breath.
• Imagine a place that feels as calm and peaceful as you possibly can (e.g. a sandy beach, a woodland, a place you visited as a child, a field, your bedroom, a park – your ideal safe haven).
• Visualise the place in as much detail as you can.
• Notice how you feel in this place.

What can you see?
What can you smell?
What can you feel?
What can you hear?

Why it works: Your mind will feel able to relax if it feels safe.
Try something different...

Have a positive word with yourself

Are your thoughts black or white, good or bad?
Can you blow things out of proportion?
If one thing is going wrong, does it feel like everything is going wrong?

- Keep a record of your thoughts or the things you are worried about to find out what you are actually thinking and when.
- Question negative thoughts and consider positive or neutral alternatives...

Why it works:
When we feel anxious we naturally focus on negative aspects of the world around us.

“I did well”
“I’m doing my best”
“I can only do so much”
“We all struggle sometimes”

“Can you blow things out of proportion?”

Focus your attention

- Do something that requires your full attention.
- Notice when you have negative thoughts or feelings.
- Let the thoughts go and bring your attention back to what you’re intending to do.

Why it works:
When we feel anxious our mind naturally focuses on worrying things - it can be helpful to try not for a few minutes.

Face your fears

- Try not to avoid something just because it makes you feel anxious.
- Anxiety is a normal part of life and it is normal to experience a certain level of anxiety every day.
- If something makes you feel anxious, it might suggest you don’t feel capable of doing whatever it is.
- What can you do to feel more capable or prepared?
- Make a list of the things you are worried about.
- Can you start small with one manageable task and build up to what you need to get done? Is there a more manageable way of going about it?
- Remember – you can only give it a go and do your best.

Why it works:
It’s natural to avoid things that makes us anxious but this stops us from learning that we can cope.

Take back control!

- Do something that you are in control of and can easily achieve.
- Pick up your laundry off the floor, find something nutritional to eat, do five minutes of the work you are finding difficult, cut your toenails, go outside, change your bed sheets, do your paperwork.

Why it works:
Giving yourself a sense of achievement (however small) will help you to feel more capable.

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