Feeling Anxious



Feeling anxious is a normal feeling. Lots of things can make us feel anxious. This will be different for different people.

We can get anxious when we are doing something for the first time, or if things don't work out the way we would like.

People use different words to talk about feeling anxious such as feeling uptight, worried or stressed. What words do you use?

Kate's story

Kate is feeling anxious because of some changes in her life recently. Kate has a job in a charity shop, but she hasn't been enjoying it so much since a new manager took over. The manager has made some changes to the job and Kate finds this confusing. Kate goes to her local club twice a week, but she hasn't been enjoying that so much because one of her friends has stopped going. Kate's parents have always been a good support, but they are getting older now, so she doesn't want to worry them with her problems.



What makes you feel anxious?

Tick the boxes if these things have made you anxious.

	Yes ✓	No ✗
Going somewhere for the first time		
Travelling on the bus or train on my own		
Will I lose my place at college?		
When I make mistakes or forget things		
If people tell me to hurry up		
Being in crowds and busy places		
When there are lots of changes		
When I feel unwell		
If I don't know what to say to people		
What if my mum or dad gets ill?		

Are any other things making you anxious just now?

Worries

When we are anxious, we often think or say things to ourselves inside our mind. These are sometimes called worries or anxious thoughts. In this booklet we call these worries.

Worries can go around and around in our mind and can be difficult to stop.

This can happen to anyone. The problem is, that if you spend a lot of time worrying it can make your anxiety even worse.

Often one worry leads to another and it can be hard to think about anything else. This means we can't concentrate on what we are doing.



Kate's worries:

Kate has been getting caught up in lots of worries about her job in the charity shop. There are lots of changes and new rules for staff to follow. Kate has been finding the changes difficult and sometimes she hasn't gone to work because she is anxious. The more she thinks about this, the more anxious she gets. She also worries that if she loses her job then she might not be able to find another one. These thoughts get stuck in her mind.

Kate also worries about the future and all the things that might go wrong.



What are your worries? You can write these below.

Anxiety in the body

We can notice changes in our body when we feel anxious. Some changes are below:

Tick the changes you feel in your body

	Yes ✓	No ✗
Heart beating fast		
Stomach churning/feeling sick		
Legs shaking		
Feeling hot and sweaty		
Wanting to go to the toilet more often		
Tense shoulders		
Breathing quickly		

When **you** are anxious what changes do you notice in your body?



When Kate feels anxious, she notices her stomach churning. Her shoulders feel tight and tense. Sometimes if Kate gets really anxious her legs get shaky and she has to sit down. Then Kate worries that people might notice that she is anxious and this makes her feel worse.

Some things you can do to stay calm.

Here are some ideas for staying calm.

Some ideas are:

- Calm thinking
- Relaxing your body
- Taking your mind off of worries
- Staying in touch with each other
- Being kind to yourself and others



Calm Thinking

One of the things you can do to feel less anxious is to practice calm thinking. The more you practice the easier it will be.

Looking at things differently

If we **stop** and **notice** that we are worrying we can try and see things differently.

Stop, Notice and Think Different.

Kate's Story

When Kate has an anxious thought like 'What if I get things wrong at work?', she has been trying to stop and look at the situation differently. Kate tells herself 'It's okay, I can ask for help. Everyone makes mistakes at times.' This is a calm thought and helps her feel less anxious.

Other *calm thoughts* that can help us when we are anxious are:

'This won't last forever'

'I'm not alone – other people make mistakes too'

'I can get through this'

'I have my support workers to help me with problems'



Relax your body.

When we are anxious our breathing speeds up, and if we breathe too quickly this can make us feel even more anxious. So, to calm down, it helps to stop and take some slow breaths. It is a good idea to practise slow breathing to get the best results.



- Sit on a chair
- Take a few slow, easy breaths
- Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth, if this feels comfortable.
- You can count these breaths 1 – 2 – 3
- Let your shoulders relax
- Try and let your muscles go soft and relaxed

Sometimes relaxing activities can help you relax your body. This might be having a bath or listening to relaxing music.

What relaxing activities do you enjoy?

If you would like to find out more about relaxation you can watch the short relaxation film.
https://youtu.be/b7IjhxEtSXw

Do something to take your mind off of worries.

Another way to feel less anxious is to do something to take your mind off your worries. This is sometimes called distraction. You can choose something to do when you feel anxious.

Kate's story:

Kate has been worrying about changes at work. To take her mind off these worries she has been planning things she enjoys doing, like going to the cinema and meeting her friend for a coffee.
Her support worker also helped her to find a new exercise class.
When she's at home, she tries to keep busy and likes to watch her favourite programmes. Kate finds that if she focusses on what she is doing NOW it takes her mind off worries about the future.

Some other good ideas for things to do are:

- Going out for lunch
- Going shopping
- Watching DVDs
- Getting things done around the house
- Artwork
- Phoning someone for a chat

Talking to others and keeping in touch.

Having a chat with others can help take your mind off worries too. It might help to meet friends for a coffee and a chat, or if you can't meet up you can talk on the phone or keep in touch by text. If you need help with this ask your support worker to help.

Be kind to yourself.

Sometimes we can be quite tough on ourselves and might give ourselves a hard time. It really helps to be kind to ourselves when we feel anxious...

This might involve some of the ideas above, like calm thoughts or slow breathing. Other small things might help.

Notice if you are being too hard on yourself and try these kind thoughts:



Being kind to others feels good too.

We all feel good about helping other people. This can be doing something small like phoning a friend to let them know you are thinking about them. Or you could send a card to someone you care about. Other ideas you might have are:

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Kate's story:

Instead of getting stressed about the changes at work, Kate has been finding other things to do instead. She has been taking her mind off her worries by doing things she enjoys, like meeting her friend for a lunch, dancing and keeping fit. Whenever she worries about losing her job she practices her calm thinking.



Make a plan and practice

Use this page to build a plan that works for you, write down things that might make you feel better when you are feeling anxious:



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