

Your

# Well-being

A Self Help Guide



**Learn more about:**

Challenging unhelpful thoughts and emotions

Relaxation

Problem solving

Looking after yourself

Communication

Timekeeping and organisation

## Challenging unhelpful thoughts

The way we think about things has an impact on our mood, anxiety and stress levels. Many of these thoughts occur outside of our control and can be negative or unhelpful. It is therefore important to remember that they are just thoughts, without any real basis and are not necessarily facts. Even though we may believe a lot of our unhelpful thoughts when we are low, anxious or stressed, it is good to remember that they should be questioned as they are often based on wrong assumptions.

The following section will help you begin to recognise if you are thinking about things in an unhelpful or unrealistic way and discuss how you can start to make changes to this. By doing so, you can learn to see things in a more realistic light which can help to improve your mood and reduce your stress and anxiety levels. You might have unhelpful thoughts about all kinds of things. Here are some examples:

### Yourself:

- I'm boring
- I'm ugly
- I'm a failure

### Not Pretty Enough



Not Good Enough

### Others:

- No-one likes me
- People are out to get me
- Everyone is better than me

Not Smart Enough

### The world:

- Life is unfair
- The world is a horrible place

### The future:

- Things will never get better
- What's the point of continuing
- I'm destined to fail

It is clear to see how this kind of thinking might bring your mood and confidence levels down. Do you ever think in any ways outlined above? Fill in your examples below:

You might find it difficult to identify an unhelpful thought.

Try thinking about a time when you felt particularly low, worried or stressed. Consider what was running through your mind at the time.

## Patterns of unhelpful thinking

First you need to be able to recognise an unhelpful thought. Then you can challenge it. Being aware of the common patterns that unhelpful thoughts follow can help you to recognise when you have them. Here are some of the common patterns that our unhelpful thoughts follow:

### Predicting the future

#### Catastrophising

#### What if?

When people are worried about something it is common for them to spend a lot of time ruminating. You can end up thinking about the future and predicting what might go wrong. This is instead of just letting things be. You might blow things out of proportion, or come to expect a catastrophe. For example:

- What if I go to a party and no-one talks to me?
- What if I don't make friends when I start my new job?
- What if I can't cope and have a panic attack?

### Jumping to conclusions

#### Taking things personally

#### Mind reading

When people are feeling emotionally vulnerable, it is likely that they take things to heart and become more sensitive to what people say. They can often make assumptions about why someone said something, being overly quick to draw conclusions and thinking that they are the focus of what has been said. For example:

- You think that a friend has ignored you, but in fact they have other things on their mind.
- They must be laughing at me.

### Focusing on the negative

#### Ignoring the positive

#### Filtering

Often people can ignore the positive aspects of life or their situation. Instead you may focus on negative elements. This style of thinking stops us feeling good about ourselves. It can lower your confidence. For example:

- Despite having many friends, we focus on the one person that doesn't seem to like us.
- I was only able to cope on that occasion because .....

### Black & white thinking

All or nothing

Perfectionism

"Should" thinking

Sometimes people only see things as black or white, with no grey area or in-between. Having this polarised view can lead some people into setting themselves impossibly high standards, being overly critical and struggling to recognise any achievement due to their perfectionism.

- That was a complete waste of time
- They must hate me
- I should always get full marks

### Over-generalising

Labelling

Based on one isolated incident you might assume that over events will follow a similar pattern in the future. You might find it hard to see a negative event as a one-off. This can also mean that you label yourself, often unkindly, which can lower your mood and confidence, perhaps even leading to feelings of hopelessness. For example:

- Failing my driving test means I'll fail at everything
- The neighbour's dog snarled at me, all dogs are vicious!
- I'm useless

Do any of the unhelpful thoughts follow some of these patterns? Jot down any examples you can think of into the box below:

Unhelpful Thought	Category
eg <i>"I'm such a loser"</i>	<i>Labelling</i>

We can learn techniques to challenge these unhelpful thoughts. This can help to improve your mood and reduce your anxiety and stress levels. The next part of this booklet will discuss how we can go about challenging our unhelpful thoughts. You may come up with a more balanced thought that is accurate and based on evidence.

## How to challenge unhelpful thoughts

Once you have recognised an unhelpful thought, the next stage is to challenge it. To do this, you can ask yourself a series of questions. See example below:

Situation: My friend hasn't called me after saying they would



How you feel: Worried, upset, low

Unhelpful thought: They must dislike me; perhaps they don't want to be my friend after all!

## Challenges to an unhelpful thought

Now you can challenge your unhelpful thoughts by asking these questions:

### ***Is there any evidence that contradicts this thought?***

- Perhaps they haven't got away yet or are busy?
- Maybe they just forgot

### ***Can you identify any of the patterns of unhelpful thinking described earlier?***

- I'm catastrophizing
- Mind-reading

### ***What would you say to a friend who had this thought in a similar situation?***

- I'd say – they're probably just busy, stop stressing; they'll no doubt call soon

### ***What are the costs and benefits of thinking in this way?***

- Costs: I am likely to be on edge a lot and suspicious of my friend
- Benefits: I can't think of any

### ***How will you feel about this in 6 months' time?***

- I'll probably look back and laugh about how silly I was being

### ***Is there another way of looking at this situation?***

- They're probably just busy and will call soon

Once you have asked yourself these questions, you should read through your answers. Try to come up with a more balanced or rational view. For example:

***I'm sure there'll be a good explanation as I don't have any evidence that suggests that they're fed up with me.***

Try to apply these questions to the unhelpful thoughts that you notice. It can help to improve your mood and reduce your anxiety and stress levels. You can use this technique to test if your thoughts are realistic and balanced.

HELPFUL



UNHELPFUL



# THOUGHTS are **NOT** FACTS PRACTICE

mindful  
mindful.org

When you put some space between you and your reaction, it changes your relationship to your thoughts—you can watch them come and go instead of treating them as facts.

If you're stuck on a negative thought, ask yourself:

1

### Is it true?

Often the answer is, "Well, yes." This is the brain initially reacting—the autopilot you live with and believe is you.

2

### Is it **absolutely true**?

Is this thought 100% accurate? Can you see the thought in a different way?

3

### How does **this thought make me feel**?

Notice any storylines you're holding onto, and name your feelings: *sad, angry, jealous, hurt*.

4

### What would **things be like if I didn't hold this belief**?

Imagine possible benefits to your relationships, energy levels, and motivation.

<https://www.mindful.org/>



## Identifying Unhelpful Thoughts

Whenever your mood changes, try to write down what you were doing, how you felt and what you were thinking at the time.

You might find that patterns begin to emerge.

Situation	Feelings	Thoughts

## Challenging Unhelpful Thoughts

Taking a particular unhelpful thought, see if you can test it.  
Ask questions to test whether your belief has any real basis.

### Unhelpful Thought

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### Challenges

Is there any evidence that contradicts this thought?

Can you identify any patterns of unhelpful thinking?

What would you say to a friend who had this thought in a similar situation?

What are the costs and benefits of thinking in this way?

Benefits:

Costs:

How will you feel about this in 6 months time?

Is there another way of looking at this situation?



### Balanced Thought

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## Reducing avoidance

People often get into the habit of avoiding situations that cause them difficulty. This coping strategy can unfortunately make the problem worse. This is because the longer we avoid something, the more intimidating it becomes. By avoiding situations, we also stop ourselves from proving that we can cope in them. As a result, our anxiety towards the situation continues and our confidence remains low. Take the example below:

*Someone who tends to worry about being judged negatively by others.*



- *May avoid going out socially, or speaking when in large groups.*
- *May avoid all performance situations, such as giving a speech or presenting their work.*



*By avoiding all of these related situations, they never have a chance to practice in them or prove that they could cope well.*

It is easy to see how using avoidance as a strategy to cope can soon begin to have a negative impact on people's lives as they start to avoid more and more situations. If instead we confront difficult situations then it is possible to build up our confidence. This will help your anxiety to reduce significantly.

Physical feelings are experienced when your body reacts to stress, fear or anxiety. These symptoms are often referred to as the 'fight or flight' response. This reaction quickly and helpfully prepares the body for action. It prepares us to either protect against or escape danger.

- Making our heart beat faster - to supply more blood to our muscles.
- Producing more sweat - to cool us down.
- Tensing our muscles - getting them ready for action.
- Taking deeper and quicker breaths - to supply oxygen to our muscles.
- Shutting down body functions that aren't needed at the time e.g. digestion.
- Racing thoughts - quickly narrowing the available options to make a quick response.

In the past such a reaction would have offered us some protection. Preparing us to react quickly in case of predators, and aiding survival as we hunted and gathered food. These days we do not depend so much upon running or fighting as we negotiate difficult circumstances. The symptoms described above are therefore less helpful. They may even end up being quite confusing. Threats like money problems, difficulties at work, challenging friends, unhelpful staff or rude drivers do not require such an extreme physical reaction.

These symptoms are not dangerous in themselves. In many ways it is a useful response, but at the wrong time. We need not fear the fight or flight reaction. It is our body's healthy protection system. Understanding this can help you to manage the physical symptoms. You need not worry about them or feel that you need to respond or react. You can allow them to pass, as they will do quite quickly.

## Things to consider:

### List the things that you avoid

Write a list of the situations that you often try to escape from or avoid.

Hierarchy items	Predicted anxiety
Speaking to a group of friends	
Asking your boss for a day off work	
Giving a presentation to a small group of people	
Making eye contact with a stranger	
Asking a shop assistant for a refund	
Asking a stranger for directions	
Making a request or asking for help	
Having a one to one conversation with a colleague, teacher etc..	

Don't fear the symptoms of anxiety. Anxiety is a natural and healthy reaction that is not dangerous.

### Ranking these situations

Rank your list of situations in order of difficulty. From the least anxiety provoking to the most anxiety provoking on a scale of 0-100. 0 = no anxiety and 100 = extreme anxiety.

Hierarchy items	Predicted anxiety
Speaking to a group of friends	75
Asking your boss for a day off work	90
Giving a presentation to a small group of people	95
Making eye contact with a stranger	50
Asking a shop assistant for a refund	60
Asking a stranger for directions	70
Making a request or asking for help	50
Having a one to one conversation with a colleague, teacher etc	75

Once you have done this, try to organise your items from least anxiety provoking to most anxiety provoking.

Try not to escape situations you fear half-way through. Stay, and your anxiety will eventually decrease.

## Confronting the lowest ranked situation

Try to confront the lowest ranked item on your list. This will be the item that causes you least anxiety. You will likely find that although your anxiety might initially rise, it will drop if you remain in the situation for long enough. Try to stay with the situation until your anxiety has reduced by at least half.

- Your anxiety will reduce each time you confront a feared situation. Try to confront your fears as often as possible.
- You may also find it helpful

## Repeating this task

Repeat the task as often as possible (every day if you can). Try not to leave too long between times when you confront this item. This is because the more you confront something, the more your fear will reduce. You should notice your anxiety getting less and less each time you do so. You may find eventually that it will cause you little or no anxiety at all.

- You may also find it helpful to challenge any unhelpful thoughts as you face a fear.
- Look out for other situations that you avoid due to anxiety. Try to gradually reduce your avoidance more and more.
- You may confront an item on your list which doesn't go as well as you had hoped. Try not to give up. Persevere, and it should eventually get easier.
- If an item on your list seems too hard, see if you can put in an extra step or two before it. This will allow your confidence to rise further before you face it.



## Moving on to the next lowest item

When you feel comfortable with an item, try to move on to the next item on your list. Working through your list you will begin to feel anxious in fewer and fewer situations. You should find that your confidence grows as you move on from each item. You should find that tasks ranked as more difficult seem more manageable as you progress.



### Things to remember:

- Don't fear the symptoms of anxiety. Anxiety is a natural and healthy reaction that is not dangerous.
- Try not to escape situations you fear half-way through. Stay, and your anxiety will eventually decrease.
- Your anxiety will reduce each time you confront a feared situation. Try to confront your fears as often as possible.
- You may also find it helpful to challenge any unhelpful thoughts as you face a fear.
- Look out for other situations that you avoid due to anxiety. Try to gradually reduce your avoidance more and more.
- You may confront an item on your list which doesn't go as well as you had hoped. Try not to give up. Persevere, and it should eventually get easier.
- If an item on your list seems too hard, see if you can put in an extra step or two before it. This will allow your confidence to rise further before you face it.



## What is anxiety?

Anxiety is an unpleasant feeling that we all experience at times. It is a word often used to describe when we feel 'uptight', 'irritable', 'tense', or 'wound up'. When we are anxious we normally experience a variety of uncomfortable physical sensations. These include:

- Increased heart rate
- Muscular tension
- Sweating
- Trembling
- Feelings of breathlessness

As well as this, anxiety affects us mentally too. For example, when anxious, we often worry for large periods of time, so much so that our worry can feel out of control. These worries are often about a variety of issues and commonly our mind jumps quickly from one worry to another.

Anxiety also influences how we behave. For instance, when we feel anxious, we often avoid doing things that we want to because we are worried about how they will turn out. Although short experiences of anxiety are part and parcel of daily life, it becomes challenging when anxiety begins to follow people around and is a regular feature in their lives.

## Self Help for Anxiety

- Do you find that you spend large periods of the day worrying?
- Do you often feel nervous, apprehensive or on edge?
- Do you feel that things are getting on top of you?
- Do you find it hard to relax and 'switch off'?
- Do you often experience unpleasant physical sensations such as 'butterflies' in your stomach, muscular tension, dizziness or breathlessness?

If the answer to any of these questions is 'yes' you may be experiencing symptoms of anxiety and you may find this workbook helpful.

This workbook aims to help you to:

- Recognise whether you may be experiencing symptoms of anxiety.
- Understand what anxiety is, what causes it and what keeps it going.
- Find ways to understand, manage or overcome your anxiety.



## What causes anxiety?

### Life Events

Often we develop anxiety following a series of stressful life event. This is especially true if we experience many different pressures all at once. For example, if someone has work pressures, financial difficulties and relationship problems, all at the same time. It is perhaps unsurprising that they become anxious. When thinking about it in this way, anxiety is often the result of feeling as though we cannot cope with the demands placed upon us.

In addition, people can learn to be anxious based on their life experiences. For example, if someone has faced workplace bullying in the past, they may be more likely to suffer anxiety when beginning a new job.

### Thinking Styles

Some people may have a thinking style that lends itself to experiencing anxiety. For example, anxious people have a tendency to expect that the worst possible scenario will always occur. They also feel like they must constantly be on guard in case something bad happens. They believe that by thinking about all the things that could go wrong, they will be better prepared to cope if it happens. However thinking in these ways means they are on regular alert and find it difficult to relax and 'switch off'.

### Evolutionary Reasons

We also experience anxiety because of its evolutionary benefits. Put another way, although anxiety is largely an unpleasant experience, it also has positive benefits that have been useful to humans over the centuries. For example, when we are under threat or feel in danger (e.g. hear a burglar), we automatically become anxious. As a result, our heart beats more quickly which supplies blood to our muscles (which helps us run away from or fight the burglar); we sweat (which cools us down during this process); and our breathing changes (which ensures oxygen is delivered to our muscles quickly, again preparing us for a quick response). When looking at anxiety in this way, you can quickly see how it can be useful in certain situations.

### Biological Reasons

It has also been suggested that anxiety has familial ties. In other words, if someone in your immediate family is an anxious person, there is an increased chance that you will have similar personality traits.

In reality it is likely that a combination of all these factors influence someone's anxiety levels. However, in some ways it is less important to know what causes anxiety and more important to know what stops us overcoming it.

## What keeps our anxiety going?

Some people have a style of thinking which lends itself to experiencing anxiety. For example, it appears that some people are more likely to overestimate the likelihood of bad things happening than others. It is easy to see how regularly presuming the worst in this way would make someone feel anxious. Unfortunately, when we do feel anxious, we become even less likely to think as clearly as we would like and a vicious cycle occurs.

Anxious people also sometimes believe that worrying has a protective function. More specifically, they believe that being on the 'look out' for danger can help them recognise and avoid it. Unfortunately, when searching for danger in this way, they soon begin seeing potential danger in many relatively safe situations which of course makes them feel anxious. They may also believe that by considering everything that could go wrong; they will be better prepared to cope when it does. However, often these beliefs mean a lot of extra time is spent worrying than is necessary, as many of our worries never come true. Of course, the more time we spend worrying, the more anxious we feel.

Another way someone's thinking style can keep their anxiety going is because they become 'worried about worrying'. Here, people tend to worry that they are doing harm to themselves (e.g. going mad) by worrying so often (which is not the case) and a vicious cycle occurs. Similarly, people often worry about the physical symptoms they experience when they are anxious (e.g. breathlessness, rapid heart rate etc). Unfortunately, worrying about these symptoms (which are perfectly safe and natural bodily reactions), only makes them feel worse, again creating a vicious cycle of anxiety.

One other important factor that can keep people's anxiety going is that they often change their behaviour as a result of their anxiety. For example, they may avoid going to a party because they have spotted many potential 'dangers' (e.g. 'what if no one likes me'). Similarly, they may put off completing an assignment because they worry about it being negatively evaluated. Unfortunately, because people tend to use such avoidance strategies, they can never see that things would often go better than they thought and their anxiety remains as a result.

Not having enough free time to relax and do the things we enjoy we can also contribute to our higher anxiety levels. On the other hand, having too much free time can mean we have lots of opportunities to engage in worry and feel anxious.

When looking more closely at anxiety, you can begin to see that our thoughts, feelings, behaviours and physical symptoms all interact and combine to keep our anxiety going.

## S.T.O.P PANIC

### EMOTIONAL HIJACKING

Deep within the brain we have the limbic system, the centre of our emotions. During our evolution, that part of the brain served us very well...love, hate, anger, fear.... all powerful emotions and part of our survival mechanism.

Love: as we evolved, it became useful to form family and friendship groups. We stood a better chance of surviving if we did not live in isolation in the jungle, where we could be picked off by wild animals.

Hate and anger: if we, our offspring, or one of our group was threatened, by engaging with hate or anger, we could strike back and even kill.

Fear: essential for our survival was the instinct to simply run away as fast as possible!

But, as we continued to evolve, we developed another huge area of brain, the neo cortex or higher intelligence and in that part of the brain, we developed everything that separated us from the animals...the ability to think and reason, the ability to speak and make tools, to plan and problem solve.

Most of the connections from the emotional brain up to the neo cortex are on the right hand side of the head and most of the rational brain is on the left and so you have a brain of two halves. Here is the point which is central to what goes on in a panic attack.

### **THE TWO HALVES OF THE BRAIN CANNOT WORK EFFECTIVELY AT THE SAME TIME**

The emotional brain has to have the ability to switch off the rational brain for survival purposes. Think of that wild animal running towards you or perhaps a bus running at you in the road. There is no time to sit and make a list. You must take action immediately to save your skin.

The emotional brain switched off the thinking brain and goes to emergency mode. So, whenever you become emotionally aroused the limbic system gets into the driver's seat.

But remember, this is an older and more basic part of the brain and it only sees things in very black and white terms. It is fight or flight, do or die, stay or go, either everything is fine or everything is terrible. If you've ever sat in a doctor's surgery feeling nervous and when you got home wondered 'why didn't I mention this' or 'why didn't I ask that?'...

Or if you've been in a supermarket and faced with a row of different brands of baked beans and not been able to make a choice, perhaps even putting down your basket and leaving the shop...

Or if you have sat down to read a book but realised that when you get to the end of the page, you haven't understood one word...

Then you know what it feels like to have your rational thinking brain disabled by the emotional brain.

This is emotional hijacking and is at the core of panic attacks.

## THE S.T.O.P SYSTEM

### WHAT WORRY DOES

Worrying thoughts have a very powerful effect on the human body and the emotional brain.

It is a fact that the body cannot tell the difference between something we vividly imagine and a real experience.

Therefore, the thoughts you have impact in many ways, for example:

**Thought:** 'I am seriously ill'

**Emotion:** feeling frightened, anxious, mental picture of a horrifying future

**Physical:** churning stomach, tensed muscles, restless, disturbed sleep, all the fight or flight reactions

**Action:** demotivated, loss of interest in daily life, withdraw from friends etc

Who is in the driver's seat?

Reframe that negative thought into something that will be more helpful to you, for example:

**Question:** 'Is there anything I can do with regard to my health?' (if there is, take action. If not, let it go and reframe)

**Thought:** 'Even if my health is not perfect, I am going to concentrate on all the good things in my life'

**Emotion:** feeling calm, positive, looking forward

**Physical:** calm physiology, good immune system, lower blood pressure, deeper sleep

**Action:** motivated to get on with life, new experiences, outings with friends, planning future

It is true to say that most people who describe themselves as worriers actually have a very powerful imaginative brain and are therefore able to frighten themselves, creating huge emotional arousal, if they create a black picture of the future. The good news is that, if they choose to rather than misuse their imagination, the sky is the limit! The greatest minds of our times, the artists, writers, inventors have all had powerful imaginations and put them to good, creative use.

## S.T.O.P PANIC

### HOW TO LOWER EMOTIONAL AROUSAL

Lowering emotional arousal is the key to solving the problem...

Fortunately, there is a very easy way to do that and one that does not involve tablets, lotions or potions, alcohol or anything weird.

It is a simple breathing technique called '**seven eleven**'.

We have known for a very long time that slowing the breathing rate has a calming effect on the body.

Now, fortunately and due to our better understanding of the human brain and body, we know why...

When we breathe in, we activate the sympathetic nervous system. It is more of an effort for us to breathe in, so we tense on the in breath.

When we breathe out, we engage the parasympathetic nervous system and we relax. In breathing out, we are working with gravity and we have a feeling of letting go.

Therefore, if we continue for some time to engage a breathing pattern of a longer and slower out breath, **WE CANNOT HELP BUT RELAX** and we are tapping into the body's relaxation response, an innate part of our human make up.

Also, with an understanding of how our emotional brain operates, if we are counting and concentrating on our breathing, we have to use the rational brain, drawing control into the neo cortex and allowing the emotional brain to calm down.

Working with a trained therapist enables you to establish the ability to relax whenever and wherever they choose, gaining control over emotional arousal, allowing you to step back from any situation, see the bigger picture and re establish control in the rational brain.

As the technique embeds, you will notice that it works more quickly and more effectively, becoming a useful stress and anger management tool.

Eventually and with sufficient practice, it will be transferred over to a subconscious process, so that like a thermostat, it will cut in automatically when the emotional temperature starts to rise.

Try it. There are no nasty side effects, no contradictions and, at the point of writing, no one has found a way of charging us for the air we breathe... **so it's free!**

## THE S.T.O.P SYSTEM

### WHEN THE EMOTIONAL TEMPERATURE STARTS TO RISE.....STOP!

**S**even eleven breathing

Diaphragmatic breathing, counting and focusing on the breathing rate means you must use the rational part of the brain. Practice it regularly to lower base stress and keep it as a useful tool in your toolbox of coping strategies.

**T**ake a step back

Step back from the situation, psychologically and perhaps physically. You may need to remove yourself from a situation until you have calmed down, especially if anger is the key emotion.

**O**bserve and scale

Take your emotional temperature. Where 1 is chilled and 10 is red hot emotion. Notice what level you are at and also notice as the level diminishes. **Observe and challenge thinking errors**. You will get better and faster at this with practice. By doing this you are stepping back into what Deikman\* called '**The Observing Self**', a very useful technique for dissociating from an experience, viewing it from further away and staying calm and in control.

**P**ractice emotional intelligence

We all need our emotions. Without them we would be like robots. **Emotional intelligence** is the ability to recognise our emotions for what they are. Remember, the emotional brain or limbic system is a more basic part of the human brain...it sees things in very black or white terms and for that reason, you do not want it to be in control. Like a spoilt child it will make demands and throw tantrums. Let the adult part of you guide the emotional brain away from self damaging behaviour. Retrain your brain by reminding yourself of the down side of high emotional arousal, until the emotional brain gets the message...**I AM BACK IN CONTROL!**

\*Arthur J Deikman: The Observing Self



## S.T.O.P PANIC

### WHAT IS A PANIC ATTACK?

During a panic attack, emotional arousal becomes very high. These are the criteria for identifying panic attacks (DSM-IV)

- Palpitations, pounding heart or accelerated heart rate
- Sweating
- Trembling or shaking
- Sensations of shortness of breath or smothering or choking
- Feeling of choking
- Chest pain or discomfort
- Nausea or abdominal distress
- Feeling dizzy, unsteady, light headed or faint
- Derealisation (feelings of unreality) or depersonalisation (being detached from oneself)
- Fear of losing control or going crazy
- Fear of dying
- Paraesthesia (numbness or tingling sensation)

These are normal reactions in a fear situation and should be regarded as reassurance that all the correct mechanisms are in place and for emergency use.

#### So, what is happening?

- The brain perceives a danger situation and presses the panic button, sending fight or flight signals through the body.
- Adrenaline pumps into the blood stream, raising blood pressure and speeding up breathing in anticipation of action of some kind.
- Blood is moved away from the digestive system and into arms and legs which may shake as they prepare to fight or un.
- That urge to be sick or defecate would ensure you smelt like bad meat and may put off a chasing animal.
- Pupils dilate to allow in more visual information...

That's all very well if you really are being chased by a wild animal but why do people experience these feelings when they are in a safe, modern environment...?

FACT or



OPINION

## FACT

Evidence to support its truth  
Undisputable  
Driven by rational thought  
Head

## OPINION

Based upon a belief or personal view  
Arguable  
Driven by and reinforced by emotion  
Heart

At stressful times, we tend to be driven by our emotions and opinions, which create a vicious cycle by fuelling each other. Our emotions strengthen our opinions, which in turn, intensify our emotions.



This leads to impulsive acts and unhelpful longer term consequences, which help to maintain the overall problem.

Realising that many thoughts are opinion rather than fact makes it less likely that we'll be distressed by them, and more able to make wise and calm decisions about the best action to take.

It is helpful to ask ourselves whether our thoughts are FACT or OPINION.

- If OPINION, then we can look at the facts – what we do **know** about the situation.
- If FACT, then we can make choices about the best thing to do.

## FACT or OPINION?

## Relaxation

It is important to make time to relax and do activities that are enjoyable. This can help to by calming the body and mind. It can also help you to sleep. Without taking the time to unwind, it is easy to feel overwhelmed and stressed.

Relaxation can involve doing something that you enjoy, or just being by yourself. Good examples might be reading a book or having a bath. Exercise is also particularly effective at helping us to relax. What you do does not really matter. Try to choose something that you will look forward to and that gives you a break. Doing an activity that you enjoy will also give you less time to spend worrying. Here is a list of activities that might help you to relax.



### Suggestions:

- Do some exercise (e.g. swim, cycle)
- Read a book
- Watch your favourite TV show
- Go to the cinema
- Do something creative (e.g. draw, paint)
- Visit a friend or family member
- Have a bath

Try to add some of your own ideas into the box below. You will know what works best for you.

Try to find time to relax every day. This might seem difficult, but it is worth making time for. It can help you to feel a lot better. There are audio relaxation guides available that you might find a helpful support.

There are also some exercises described in the next few pages. They are specifically designed to help you to relax.

## Controlled breathing

This simple technique involves focusing on and slowing down our breathing patterns. Many people find this simple exercise very relaxing. It can be particularly helpful for those who feel dizzy or light headed when they feel worried or stressed. This sometimes happens because people's breathing changes and gets quicker when they feel distressed.



This can be an uncomfortable and unpleasant experience. It can make people even more on edge, and a vicious cycle can occur. Learning controlled breathing exercises can help you to manage these feelings more effectively. It can also help to give your mind and body a chance to calm down.

Remember, you can use this exercise to help you relax at any time. You could even use it to help you get off to sleep. However, it is particularly useful if you ever feel light-headed, dizzy or faint.



### Beginning

Get into a comfortable position.



### Middle

Work out a stable breathing rhythm. Perhaps try to breathe in for three seconds, hold this breathe for two seconds, and then breathe out for three seconds. It can be helpful to count as you do this (e.g. IN: 1-2-3, HOLD: 1-2, OUT: 1-2-3, HOLD: 1-2).



## Ending

Repeat this action for a few minutes. You should soon begin to feel more relaxed. If you were feeling dizzy then this should also get better after a few minutes.

## Muscular relaxation

Tension often builds up when we feel upset or stressed. These symptoms can be painful and can cause anxiety in themselves. Muscular relaxation exercises can help you to control such unpleasant symptoms. They can reduce physical tension and help you to relax in general.

During this exercise you have to tense and then relax different muscles in your body. You should focus on the feelings that you experience whilst doing this. With practice you will then be more able to recognise and respond to the onset of tension.

You can work through as many muscle groups as you like. Don't feel that you have to cover every muscle in your whole body. It can be helpful to stick to the same muscle groups each time you practice. That way you can get into a routine which you can easily remember. If you practice this nearly every day you will probably notice an improvement after a couple of weeks.



## Beginning

Find somewhere comfortable and quiet where you won't be interrupted. You can either sit or lie down to practice this exercise. Begin by focusing on your breathing. Try to have a slow and comfortable pace. You could use the controlled breathing technique described earlier. Do this for a few minutes to prepare for the muscular relaxation exercise.



## Middle

Try to tense each muscle group for around five seconds. Don't tense the muscle too tight. Focus on the sensations that this brings. Then relax your muscles for a similar length of time, and again, focus on how this feels. Then move onto the next muscle group. Try to remember to keep your breathing at a comfortable pace throughout. Below are some suggestions of muscle groups that you may wish to work through:

- Legs - point your toes and tense your muscles as if you were trying to stand up.
- Stomach - tense your stomach muscles.
- Arms - make fists and tense your muscles as if you were trying to lift something.
- Shoulders - shrug your shoulders. Lift them up towards your ears.
- Face - make a frowning expression. Squeeze your eyes shut and screw up your nose. Clench your teeth.



## Ending

It can be helpful to spend a few minutes just lying quietly in a relaxed state. See if you can notice any tension in your body and try to relax it. Otherwise, just let the tension be. If your mind wanders, try to bring your concentration back to your breathing.

Finally, count down silently and slowly: 5...4...3...2...1...0, and come out of the relaxation in your own time. See if it's possible to carry that relaxed feeling into whatever you do next.

## Distraction

Distraction is a good technique to fend off symptoms of anxiety and stress when they feel overwhelming. This can also give you space to deal with a situation in a more considered and positive manner. It is also helpful when you don't have the space or time to use a more proactive approach, such as a relaxation exercise.

Distraction simply involves trying to take your mind off uncomfortable symptoms or thoughts. You can do this by trying to focus on something unrelated. Often this helps them to pass. It is still important to remember that the symptoms of anxiety are not harmful or dangerous. Even if you didn't use distraction or relaxation techniques, nothing terrible would happen.

Ideas to help distract you from your troubling thoughts or anxiety include:

- Try to appreciate small details in your surroundings.
- Count backwards from 100 in multiples of 3 (or 2).
- Focus on your breathing, for example, how it feels to breathe in and out.
- Count things that you can see that begin with a particular letter.
- Visualise being in a pleasant, safe and comfortable environment (e.g. being on a beach).
- Listen to your favourite music. Try to pick out all the different instruments and sounds that you can hear.

As with any relaxation exercise, it may take a few minutes before you begin to feel like its working.

## Problem Solving

You might find it more difficult to cope if you have lots of problems that you can't seem to get on top of. This can have a clear impact on our mood, anxiety and stress levels. Struggling with unresolved problems can often make us feel worse. We can end up worrying or ruminating over our problems without finding a way to resolve them. This can make us feel even more upset, and can end up interfering with our sleep.

It can help to develop a structured way of working through a problem. Beginning to overcome some of your problems might help you to feel better. You can improve your problem solving skills by learning to apply the steps outlined here.

### Identify your problem

The first thing to ask yourself is... "what is the problem?" Try to be as specific as possible. For example:

- "I owe £10 to my friend."

OR

- "I am going to miss this deadline."

### Come up with possible solutions

Try to list every way that you can think to overcome your problem. Don't worry about how unrealistic an idea seems. Write down anything and everything. The best solutions are likely to be the ones you think of yourself. This is because nobody really knows your situations as well as you do. It may help to consider:

- How you might have solved similar problems in the past.
- What your friends or family would advise.
- How you would like to see yourself tackling the problem.

### Choose a solution

Next you need to select the best solution from your list. Think carefully about each option. It is useful to go through all the reasons 'for' and 'against' each idea. This will help you to make a good decision and select the best solution.

After this you may find that you are still unsure. Perhaps a couple of approaches seem equally good. Try to pick one to begin with. If it doesn't work then you can always go back and try out a different one later.

## Break down your solution

To help you carry out your chosen solution, it can be useful to break it down into smaller steps. This can make it easier and more manageable to follow through. The number of steps required will vary depending on the solution and how complex it is. For example: Someone with debt may have decided to try and resolve their problem by getting a part time job. This would require several steps.

1. Buying a newspaper with job adverts.
2. Choosing which jobs to apply for.
3. Creating a CV.
4. Sending out their CV.
5. Buying interview clothes.
6. Preparing answers to potential interview questions.

Try to think of another problem to solve that is relevant to you, and break down your solution.

## Try out your solution and review the outcome

Follow the steps required to carry out your solution. Simply take them one at a time. Go at your own pace own pace and don't allow yourself to feel too rushed.

Once you have completed all the steps, you should then review the outcome. If you have successfully resolved your problem, then great! If the problem still exists then don't give up.

- Is there another solution on your list that you could try?
- Is there a different solution that you have yet to consider?
- Can you ask someone else if they have any ideas or advice?
- Can you combine any of your solutions?

*It is useful to remember that not all problems are within our control. This can make it really difficult if not impossible to resolve using the steps above. Perhaps you will have to wait, or ask someone else to take action instead. In such a situation, try not to worry. Nothing can be gained from worrying about something that you have no control over.*







**You may not  
be able to control  
every situation  
and its outcome,  
but you can  
control your  
attitude and how  
you deal with it.**


HpLyrikz.com

## Problem Solving

Identify a problem and try to come up with solutions to overcome it. By considering all of the options you will hopefully come up with the best solution.

 Identify Your Problem	 Possible Solutions	 For	Against





Chosen Solution	
Steps Required	
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	

# 6 STEPS TO MINDFULLY DEAL WITH DIFFICULT EMOTIONS



**1**

## Turn toward your emotions with **acceptance**

Become aware of the emotion and identify where you sense it in your body.

## Identify and label the emotion

To stay mindful, say to yourself, "This is anger" or "This is anxiety."

**2**



**3**

## Accept your emotions

Don't deny the emotion. Acknowledge and accept that it is there.

## Realize the **impermanence** of your emotions

Even if the emotion feels overwhelming, remember that it will pass.

**4**



**5**

## Inquire and investigate

Ask yourself, "What triggered me? Why do I feel this way?"

## Let go of the need to control your emotions

Be open to the outcome of your emotions and what unfolds.

**6**



The Gottman Institute

## Looking After Yourself

Taking steps towards a healthy lifestyle can have a real impact on our mood, anxiety and stress levels. On the other hand, unhealthy habits can put your health, or the health of others, at risk. It can be a real challenge to overcome some habits or behaviours. Focusing on the benefits of positive change may boost your motivation.



### Alcohol

Alcohol can impact your ability to cope and control behaviours. This can be unhelpful if you are trying to overcome problems with anger or anxiety. It can also interfere with your mood, and the quality of your sleep. You might think that consuming alcohol would help you sleep. In fact, as your body processes alcohol overnight it can wake you up. Some people use the numbing effect of alcohol to avoid thinking about or facing problems. Unfortunately, this approach can be damaging and make things worse. Drinking a lot and often can lead to a pattern of addictive substance misuse.



### Drugs

Many drugs have a sedative or stimulant effect on the body which can have an impact on your sleep and mood. Some people use recreational drugs as a distraction, to avoid thinking about or facing problems. Using such substances can be damaging and make things worse. Developing a habit of regular or increasing use can lead to a pattern of addictive substance misuse.



### Smoking

The content of cigarette smoke and nicotine replacements act as a stimulant. This can have an impact on your sleep and your mood. Some people say that smoking helps them to cope with stress. Smoking is known to have a negative impact on long-term physical health.



### Caffeine

Caffeine can trigger a reaction that is similar to the symptoms of anxiety. It can also reduce the quality of sleep. It is best not to have anything caffeinated within four hours of bedtime. Coffee, tea, hot chocolate, energy drinks, and some fizzy drinks contain caffeine.

By cutting down or stopping your consumption of potentially harmful substances, you are taking steps towards a healthier lifestyle.



### **Relationships / Social Network**

Good relationships and support from friends and family can really help us cope better. It can also mean that we overcome problems more quickly and for longer. It can be really helpful to talk through difficulties with friends. You could discuss ways of coping, and some of them might have been through something similar.



### **Healthy Eating**

What you eat and drink can have a significant impact on your mood, sleep and physical health. Consider making changes towards having a balanced, nutritious diet. Try to eat regular meals and stay hydrated. Avoid unhealthy food that contains a lot of fat or sugar. Also, consider what you eat and drink close to bedtime. Caffeine, alcohol or a large meal can interfere with your sleep.



### **Exercise**

Keeping fit and active can improve your physical health, mood and ability to cope with problems. Try to get at least some gentle exercise each week. You could try going for a walk, doing the garden or housework, playing sport or joining an exercise class. While exercise can also help us sleep, try not to be too active close to bedtime as this can keep you awake.



### **Routine**

Having a consistent routine can help give structure to your life. Patterns can be set as we react the same way or do the same thing in certain situations. Our body can begin to expect and follow such routines. For example, taking time to relax and unwind before bed, and getting up at the same time.



## Surroundings

Notice the impact of your environment on your mood. Consider the noise, temperature and light that you have to deal with. Your comfort and the tidiness of your surroundings can all have an impact on your mood. It can also affect your sleep and your overall ability to cope with problems. Try to take practical steps to resolve any particular issues.

Now you have some ideas to inspire healthy changes to your lifestyle, why not try them out? You could ask a friend for support. If you build them into your daily routine they won't seem like such a chore. Before long, you might forget you ever did anything different!

## Communication

Clear communication allows you to express yourself and get your message across to others. Careful and engaged listening also helps you to understand what other people have to say. Good communication can help you to feel better understood. You may also see an improvement in your relationships.



## Listening to others

- Listen carefully to what others have to say. Don't get distracted.
- Try to avoid assumptions and misunderstandings. You could do this by repeating back or paraphrasing what was said. Check whether you have understood correctly.
- Don't jump to conclusions or try to mind-read. Ask questions if you are unsure.
- Try to understand the meaning and emotions expressed by the other person. It can be helpful to know why they are saying something to you.



## Expressing yourself

- Think about what you mean to say before saying it. Also, consider what others might take from your comments.
- Try to be as clear as possible.
- Don't immediately get defensive or fight back. Try to understand more about what the other person feels and why they have said what they said.
- Express your own emotions in an appropriate and considered way. Avoid using an angry or confrontational style. Otherwise this may cause the other person to react in fear, hurt or frustration.

## Styles of Communication

There are a range of communication styles that different people use at different times. Some are more effective and appropriate than others, depending upon the situation. The three most common are passive, aggressive and assertive communication.



### Passive

- You prioritise the needs of others over your own.
- You go along with what other people want to do.
- You don't express or make known your own needs or desires.
- You may find it difficult to say no to someone.
- You fear people in authority.
- You cannot stand being criticised.

This style of communication can mean that you don't feel listened to by others. You might feel that you are walked over. If such a pattern builds up then people may not expect to hear your opinion. They can become used to ignoring you. You may end up accepting work or favours despite feeling that they may be unfair.



### Aggressive

- You prioritise your own needs above the needs of others.
- You're always forcing your point through.
- You can't stand not getting your own way.
- You ignore other people and do not listen to their opinions and expressed needs.

This can be quite a confrontational style of communication which can lead to alienation. People may feel that they do not enjoy being with you because you do not take their opinions into consideration.



### Assertive

- You try to balance your own needs against the needs of others.
- You take time to listen to other people's points of view.
- Expressing a preference before negotiating in a polite and constructive fashion.
- Believing that everyone should have an opportunity to express their needs.
- You have respect for yourself and respect for other people.

Being assertive involves being aware of your own needs. You can then express these with confidence. Your attitude and approach should be calm, confident and considerate.

Being assertive is about achieving an appropriate balance between the two extremes of aggressive and passive communication styles. It can be hard to be assertive especially if you feel anxious or intimidated by a situation. It may help to practice particular techniques and strategies.

## Techniques and Strategies

You may find it more difficult to communicate in certain situations. For example, at school, at work, with a member of the opposite sex, or with those in authority. It may be helpful to rehearse or role-play different scenarios. This can help you to gain confidence in difficult situations. Here are some helpful tips on being assertive:

- Communicate succinctly.
- Maintain appropriate eye-contact.
- Be polite but firm.
- Keep a calm, relaxed tone of voice and body posture.

You may feel nervous going into a difficult situation. Practising specific strategies can help you feel more prepared. You might also find the use of relaxation techniques helpful.



## "I" statements

You may be unhappy about someone's behaviour. It is best to communicate to them how you feel about the situation. This tells the other person how you feel and paves the way for a helpful discussion of the situation. This is different from a "you" message which attacks or accuses the other person. Imagine this situation:

*You had planned to meet on several occasions with a friend many times. Each time, your friend cancels or when they do turn up, they are always late.*



Calmly saying:

*"I get quite upset when you arrive late and often cancel. I often give up a lot of my time to organise these things. I feel that it's a waste sometimes."*

Rather than:

*"You're always late and mostly cancel. You're selfish and inconsiderate. You can find other friends from now on."*



## Scratched Record

This can be useful with strangers when you have a specific task. For example, when taking something back to a shop. It consists simply of repeating your point several times no matter how the other person tries to divert you. Imagine this situation:

*Taking a pair of trousers back to the shop.*



*Customer:*

"I'd like to return these trousers because they've got a mark on them."

*Sales Assistant:*

"Hmm...Well, it's only a small mark. It will probably wash off."

*Customer:*

"I'd still like them changed please."

*Sales Assistant:*

"We don't have any more of that size in stock."

*Customer:*

"I would like a replacement pair please."

*Sales Assistant:*

"OK. We'll re-order them. They should be in by the end of the week."

## Taking Criticism

It can be difficult to listen to criticisms. It is a chance to learn about yourself as others see you. Helpful criticism can be very useful. This is very different to negative insults. Try simply listening to what is being said. Check that you understand their comments by repeating them back in your own words. You might not immediately agree with what has been said. It is important to stand your ground, but not become defensive. Imagine this situation:

*Person B is trying on a shirt and asks Person A for their opinion.*



*Person A:*

"You don't suit that shirt at all!"

*Person B:*

"OK...there's something you don't like about it."

*Person A:*

"The colour's wrong for you and the collars too large."

*Person B:*

"You feel it would be better some other colour."

*Person A:*

"Well, I thought that blue shirt you tried on yesterday looked great. I hope you don't think I'm being too blunt."

Two unhelpful responses to Person A's first comment could have been:

1. "Yes, I'm a terrible dresser." - This is not what Person A said. The comment was about one shirt. It was not about how Person B dresses all the time.
2. "What a cheek! You're no supermodel yourself." - This comment is more likely to lead to an argument.

Person B was instead able to simply listen to what Person A said. It was then possible for Person B to find out something useful about their appearance and the shirt. Person B may have gained the respect of Person A for being able to accept their comments.

## Making Good Use of Your Time

When we are feeling low, anxious or stressed our motivation to do things often decreases. You may find that you give up hobbies or activities that you previously enjoyed. Over time you might end up doing very little. This can lead you to feel even lower and a cycle can begin which is difficult to escape from.



By using a diary to plan your week in advance, you may be able to do more of the things you want to, in addition to the things that you have to do. This can really help to lift your mood. This section aims to give you advice that will help you to plan your weeks well.

When completing your diary, start by filling in all the activities that you have to do. For example, preparing meals, doing housework, attending appointments, doing homework, relaxing etc. This will show you all the time that you have free. Then you can begin to plan other activities that you would like to do. Remember to pace yourself. Give yourself space to be busy or take time out to relax. You may find it helpful to plan in some time for:

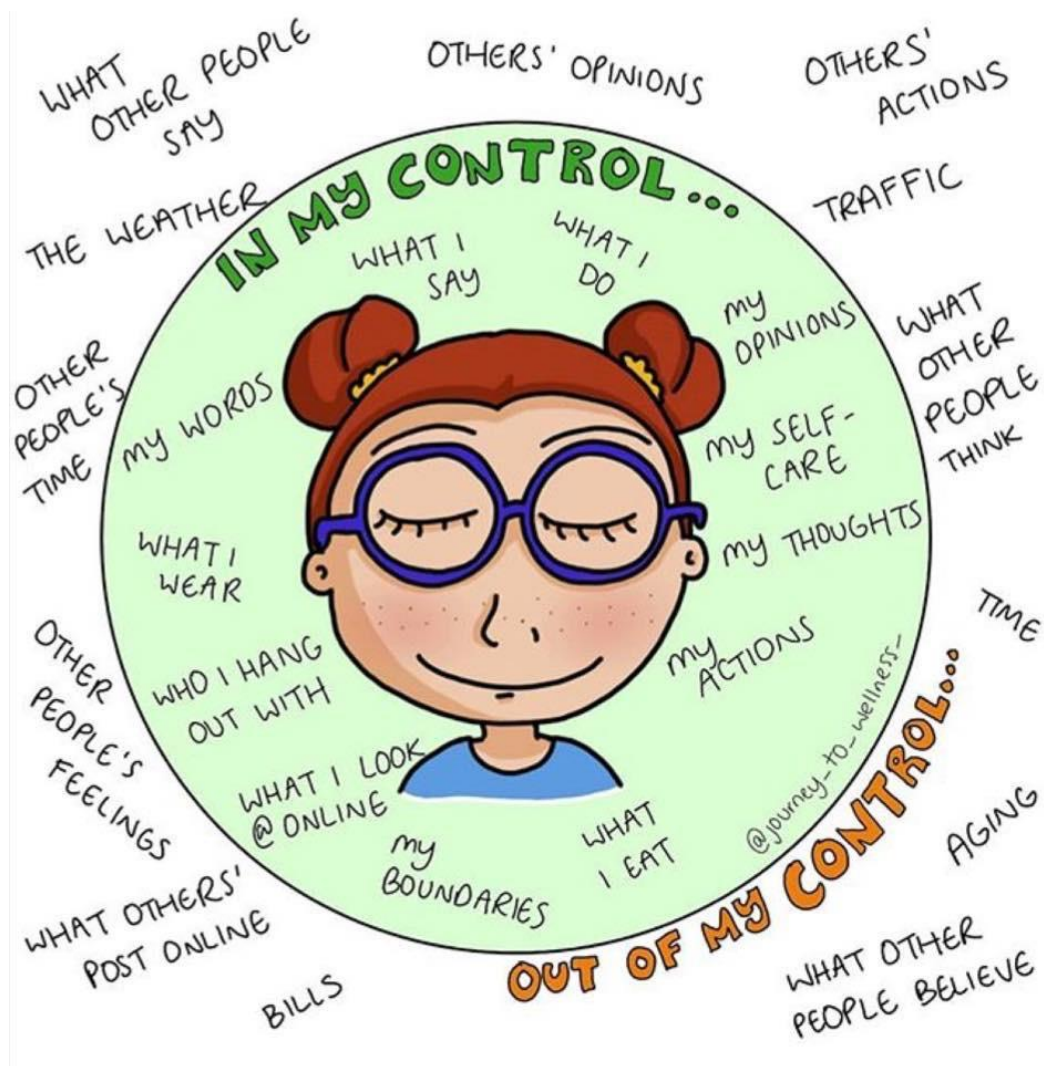
- Socialising - Social contact often helps us feel better, even though you may not feel like it at times.
- Hobbies and interests - This might be something you have enjoyed in the past, or a new project.
- Exercise - This can improve your mood and general health. It doesn't need to be anything too energetic. Just going for a walk regularly can be a good option.
- Bedtimes - Try to plan regular and consistent bedtimes. Having a regular sleeping pattern can help improve your mood and energy levels.
- Time for yourself - Make time to relax and give yourself space between activities.

Some ideas have been provided in the box below that may help you get started. We all have different interests, so try to do things that you know will work for you. Fill in your ideas in the space provided:

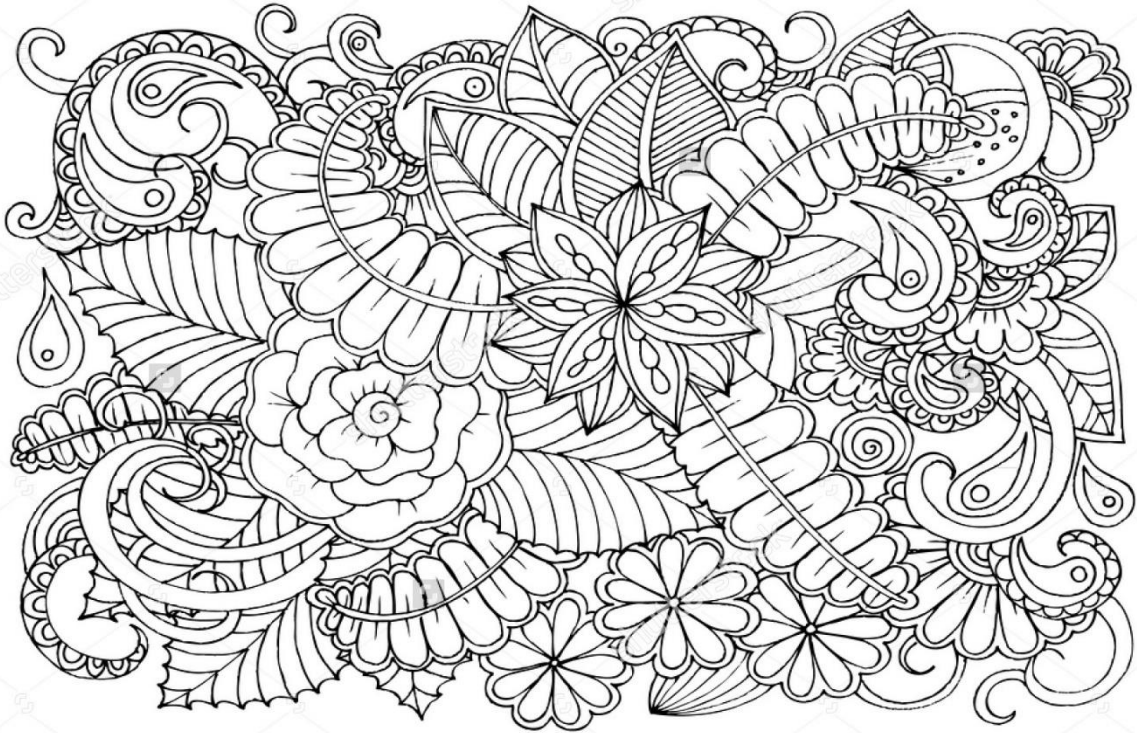
Suggestions	Your Ideas
Visit a friend Go to the cinema Do something active (take the dog for a walk; housework) Take part in a hobby or sport Treat yourself (e.g. buy something nice) Do something creative (e.g. draw; paint etc) Watch a movie Read a book Visit a relative	

Now try to complete a plan for a week. You don't have to fill in every space - this can be quite difficult. You could start by just adding in one or two new activities for each day.

# In My Control or Out of My Control?

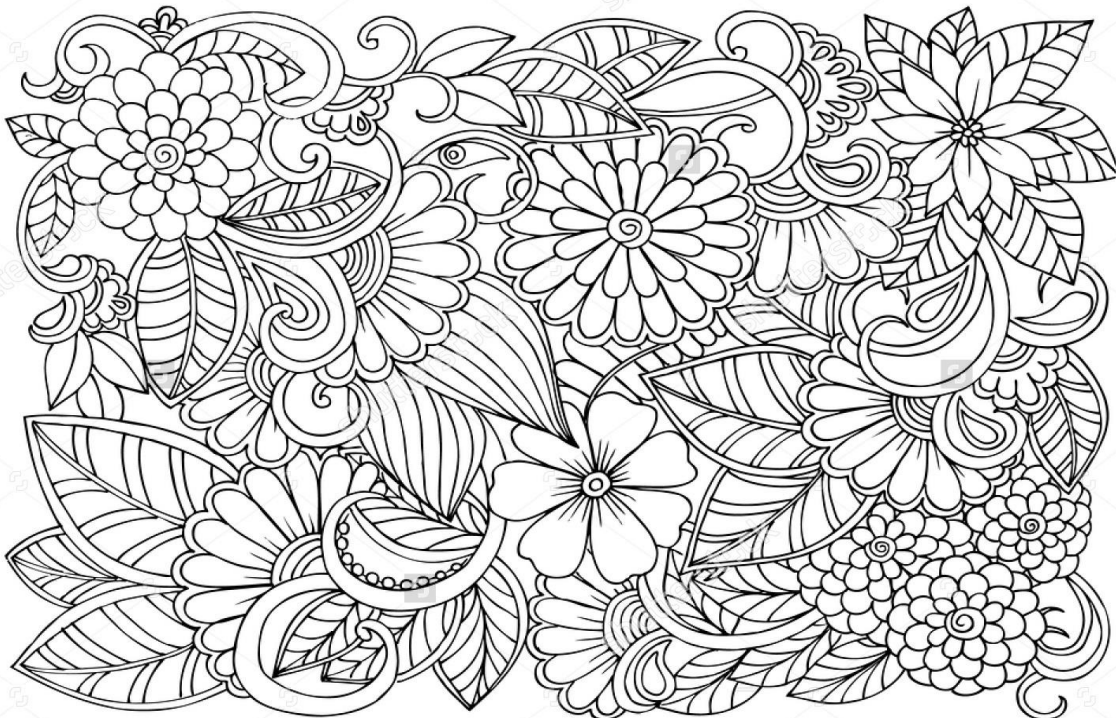


Once you have filled in your diary, all you have to do is try to follow your plan each day. Don't worry if unexpected things come up and you cannot stick to it exactly. In fact, it is very unlikely that things will go exactly as you planned. It is also fine to be flexible and replace some activities with new ones. Leave out some tasks altogether if you don't have



time for them. Try to be relaxed if this happens.

### **HOW ABOUT SOME MINDFULNESS COLOURING?**



### Activity Diary

Try to plan activities to fill your week. This can help you to make good use of your time.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Breakfast							
Morning							
Morning							
Lunch							
Afternoon							
Afternoon							
Dinner							
Evening							
Bedtime							

## Thought Diary

Whenever your mood changes, try to write down what you were doing, how you felt and what you were thinking at the time. You might find that patterns begin to emerge. Then taking a particular unhelpful thought, see if you can test it. Ask questions to test whether your belief has any real basis.

Situation	Emotion(s)/ How it makes you feel	Unhelpful thought(s)	Challenges to unhelpful thought(s) Use the questions listed below to help	Balanced thought(s) Can you think of a more balanced thought that would be more accurate
			<p>Is there any evidence that contradicts this thought?</p> <p>Can you identify any of the patterns of unhelpful thoughts described above?</p> <p>What would you say to a friend who had this thought in a similar situation?</p> <p>How will you feel about this in 6 months time?</p> <p>What are the costs and benefits of thinking this way? Benefits: Costs: Is there another way of looking at this situation?</p>	

## Exposure Diary

Record how you get on with each experience or exercise. Write down how anxious you feel at different times, before, during and after. Use a scale from 'not anxious' (0) to 'extremely anxious' (100). By practicing exposure you will find that your anxiety reduces over time.

	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 4	Time 5	Time 6	Time 7
Practice 1							
Practice 2							
Practice 3							
Practice 4							
Practice 5							
Practice 6							
Practice 7							
Practice 8							

Anxiety rated 0-100



# COPING TOOLS: What Helps Me

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read A Book or Magazine             | <input type="checkbox"/> Ride a Bike or Skateboard            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hug or Climb a Tree                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Create Origami                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Journal or Write a Letter           | <input type="checkbox"/> Cook or Bake                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use Kind & Compassionate Self-Talk  | <input type="checkbox"/> Ask for Help                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Make a Collage or Scrapbook         | <input type="checkbox"/> Talk to Someone You Trust            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rest, Nap or Take a Break           | <input type="checkbox"/> Weave, Knit or Crochet               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Go on a Hike, Walk or Run          | <input type="checkbox"/> Build Something                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take Good Care of the Earth       | <input type="checkbox"/> Get a Hug                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Drink Water                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Visualize a Peaceful Place         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Play a Board Game                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Stretch                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do Something Kind                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Make Art                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Make and Play with Slime          | <input type="checkbox"/> Use Positive Affirmations          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Discover Treasures in Nature      | <input type="checkbox"/> Take Slow, Mindful Breaths         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take a Shower or Bath             | <input type="checkbox"/> Clean, Declutter or Organize       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Exercise                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Use Aromatherapy                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Drink a Warm Cup of Tea           | <input type="checkbox"/> Cry                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Forgive, Let Go, Move On          | <input type="checkbox"/> Try or Learn Something New         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Practice Yoga                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to Music                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Garden or Do Yardwork             | <input type="checkbox"/> Use a Stress Ball or Other Fidget  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jump on a Trampoline              | <input type="checkbox"/> Get Plenty of Sleep                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cuddle or Play with Your Pet      | <input type="checkbox"/> Kick, Bounce or Throw a Ball       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Practice Gratitude                | <input type="checkbox"/> Take or Look at Photographs        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do a Puzzle                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Eat Healthy                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blow Bubbles                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Play Outside                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Smile and Laugh                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Sing and/or Dance                  |

# Breathing Exercises

## Four In, Four Out Slow Belly Breathing

1. Close your eyes.
2. Breathe through your nose.
3. Deliberately slow your breathing down.
4. Breathe from your relaxed belly.
5. Keep your breaths smooth, steady, and continuous.
6. Breathe in while counting slowly "1-2-3-4."
7. Pause.
8. Breathe out while counting slowly "1-2-3-4."
9. Pause.

## Whole Body Muscle Tensing and Relaxing

1. Take a very deep breath in with your mouth open; fill your lungs up.
2. Hold your breath.
3. Tense muscles all over your body.
4. Count 5-10 seconds.
5. Let go of all the tension in your muscles and slowly let your breath out.

## 4-4-4-4 Breathing

1. Breathe in while counting to 4. Make it a deep, belly breath.
2. Hold your Breath while counting to 4.
3. Breathe out while counting to 4.
4. Hold your Breath while counting to 4.
5. Do this sequence 2 more times.

## 4-6-4-6 Breathing

1. Breath in for a count of 4.
2. Hold for a count of 6.
3. Breathe out for a count of 4.
4. Hold for a count of 6.

## The Sigh

1. Breath in.
2. When you breath out, open your mouth and let the air out so you hear the sound of the air releasing, a soft sigh sound.
3. As you let the air out, relax your shoulders, neck and other muscles and let go, like you're melting.

## Buteyko Small Breath Holds

1. With your mouth closed, take a small, but calm and relaxed, breath in.
2. Take a small breath out.
3. Hold your nose closed with your hand.
4. Hold for a count of 5.
5. Release.
6. Gentle, soft breathing in-between sets.
7. Tongue rests at the roof of the mouth; Teeth slightly apart; jaw relaxed; Drop shoulders; relax chest and belly; Relax facial muscles.

## Alternate Nostril Breathing

1. Close the right nostril with your right thumb. Then inhale slowly through your left nostril.
2. Then close the left nostril with your right index finger and open the right nostril by removing the right thumb. Exhale very slowly through the right nostril.
3. Then draw the air through the right nostril as long as you can do it with comfort and exhale through the left nostril by removing the right index finger.
4. This is one round. Do 12 rounds.
5. Breathing in and out should be as slow, soft, steady and long as possible. But don't force.

## 4-7-8 Breathing

1. Exhale all the air out through your mouth.
2. Curl the tip of your tongue up to touch the hard ridge behind your upper front teeth and hold it there for the duration of the exercise.
3. Close your mouth and inhale through your nose for a count of 4. Don't force it, but take a good breath as this has to last for the next 15 counts.
4. Hold your breath for a count of 7.
5. Open your mouth and exhale through your mouth (still pressing the tip of your tongue to the hard ridge behind your upper front teeth) for a count 8. of You will make a sound as the air moves around your tongue. You may want to purse your lips if this helps you to direct the flow of your exhalation.
6. Repeat 4 times.

(instructions written by madyinlovewithlife.com)

## The Complete Breath

1. First, inhale completely at the abdomen.
2. Continue to inhale by filling in the mid-section, the area of the diaphragm.
3. Continue to inhale by filling the chest, allowing the upper chest and the shoulders to rise.
4. Then systematically release and empty from the upper portion, then the mid-section, and finally empty completely at the abdomen.

(www.swamij.com)

## Relearn How To Breathe (Don Campbell)

1. Inhale deeply
2. Exhale with a short burst (as if blowing out a candle). This helps activate your diaphragm.
3. Exhale with a long, slow finish to empty the lungs. Breathlessness is from not expelling enough CO2.
4. Inhale, filling your lungs from the bottom to the top, instead of taking short sips. Most use a third of their lung capacity.
5. Hold for a moment to allow oxygen to saturate the cells.
6. Exhale slowly and completely.
7. Repeat steps 4 through 6 for five minutes.
8. Do this exercise five times a day

### 3 Anxiety Breathing Techniques You Can Practice Anywhere

Breathing Techniques are a safe and natural way to calm anxiety. And once learned, you can practice them anywhere. Just three minutes of calm breathing can help you settle racing thoughts and reduce anxiety.

Many people living with high levels of anxiety tend to breathe high up in their chest. Shallow breathing can increase anxiety by building into hyperventilation that causes an imbalance in oxygen and carbon dioxide levels. Slow, steady breathing focusing on a longer exhalation redresses this imbalance and takes the body out of the fight or flight and anxiety into a more relaxed state. Working with anxiety calming breathing techniques sends a message to your nervous system that allows it to downgrade anxiety and switch into the relaxation response.

#### Here are 3 of our favourite Anxiety Breathing Techniques

##### 1. The Measured Breath

Here's how to do it:

- You can sit or stand, but be sure to soften up a little before you begin. Make sure your hands are relaxed, and your knees are soft.
- Drop your shoulders and let your jaw relax.
- Now breathe in slowly through your nose and count to four, keep your shoulders down and allow your stomach to expand as you breathe in.
- Hold the breath for a moment.
- Now release your breath slowly and smoothly as you count to seven.
- Repeat for a couple of minutes.

##### 2. The Bumble Bee Breath

You might prefer to be alone for this one as you'll be making a noise. Strange though it sounds, this little technique has been used for thousands of years for calming the mind and it feels so good that you probably won't care what people think. Whenever I teach workshops on meditation or reducing stress and anxiety the Bumble Bee Breath is always a favourite.

Here's how to do it:

- Relax your shoulders
- Close your throat slightly so you can hear your breath when you breathe in
- Cover your ears with your thumbs and your eyes with your fingers
- Keep your lips closed but lightly and your teeth slightly apart with your jaw relaxed and breathe out slowly making a long, low humming sound
- Make your exhalation long and smooth
- Repeat 5-10 times
- Then sit with long slow breaths for a couple of minutes and enjoy the peace.

And finally, the most popular breathing exercise for anxiety: Diaphragmatic, or Belly, breathing. This exercise is especially effective when panic or anxiety attacks strike. I recommend you try it any time you feel slightly stressed, or aggravated so you become really familiar with it. Then, if you find yourself feeling anxious or hyper-ventilating you can start belly breathing immediately and it will help you feel in control fast.

### **3. Belly Breathing for Relaxation**

- Breathe in slowly and deeply through your nose. Make sure your shoulders are down and relaxed. In this exercise, your stomach should expand, but your chest should rise very little. So, if you want, you can place one hand on your stomach and the other on your chest so you can feel how you are breathing.
- Exhale slowly through your mouth. As you blow air out, purse your lips slightly, but keep tongue and jaw relaxed. You may hear a soft “whooshing” sound as you exhale. That’s good, listen for that sound every time your practice and learn to value it as the sound of relaxation.
- Repeat this breathing exercise for several minutes. Make your outgoing breath as long and smooth as you can. The out breath is the key to relaxation so give it your full attention and practice breathing out in a long slow controlled breath and you will quickly feel the benefit

## Grounding with your five senses

The '5-4-3-2-1' tool is a simple yet effective method for regaining control of your mind when anxiety threatens to take over – and it consists of more than counting backwards from five.

This method helps bring us back to the present by relying on our five senses – sight, sound, touch, smell and taste.

The first step encourages those suffering in a moment of anxiety to look around at their surroundings and identify five things they can see at the moment.

Next, identify four things you can hear, three things you can feel – which can be anything from your feet in your shoes to a ring on your finger, then two things you can smell.

And finally, one thing you can taste – which can even be your tongue as long as you can taste it.

### Simple grounding exercise:

- 5 Things you see
- 4 Things you feel
- 3 Things you hear
- 2 Things you smell
- 1 Thing you taste

Grounding helps with anxiety, anger and focus



# GROUNDING WITH YOUR FIVE SENSES

*What are*

5

THINGS YOU CAN SEE



*Ideas*

**SUN**

PICTURE ON THE WALL  
**PEOPLE WALKING**

4

THINGS YOU CAN FEEL



**WIND BLOWING**  
FEET ON THE FLOOR  
**PENCIL IN HAND**

3

THINGS YOU CAN HEAR



**BIRDS CHIRPING**  
CLOCK TICKING  
**CAR HORNS**

2

THINGS YOU CAN SMELL



**FOOD FROM THE CAFETERIA**  
LAUNDRY DETERGENT ON CLOTHES  
**FRESH CUT GRASS**

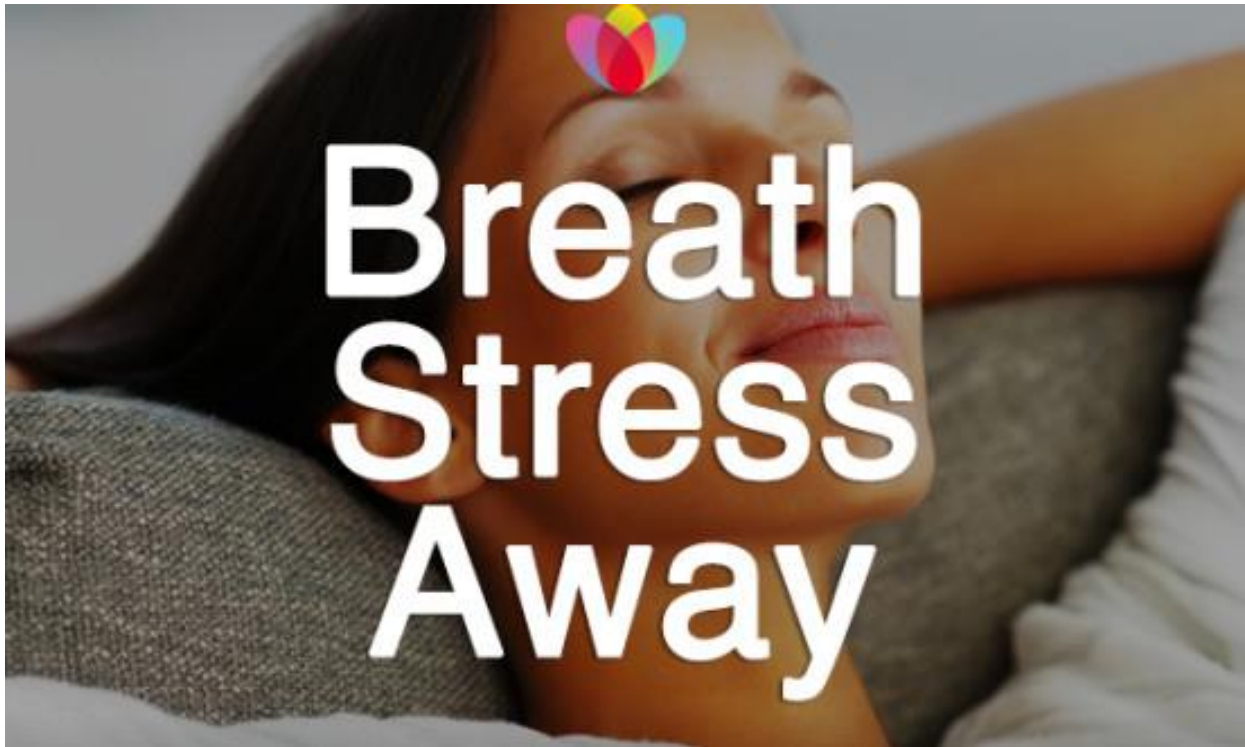
1

THING YOU CAN TASTE



**MINT**  
Breakfast  
**TOOTHPASTE**

## Breathe Stress Away



>

Do you suffer from tension or anxiety? Do you sometimes have trouble 'switching off' and going to sleep at night?

Would you like to learn a simple yet effective technique to help you take back control and relax very deeply whenever you choose?

## Learn to relax whenever you choose

Breathing is something we do all of the time but many of us get it wrong without realising.

Anxiety causes tension in the body and can make our breathing rate too fast and too shallow. This is our 'fight or flight' mechanism, which is useful if we are under threat and need to react immediately.

However, most of the time, we are not under any threat, but if our breathing has become shallow and fast by habit, then that in itself can cause tension in the body and mind.

Yes, constant shallow breathing or 'chronic hyperventilation' as it is sometimes known, actually *creates* anxiety and can even cause physical symptoms like palpitations or dizziness. It can cause headaches and muscle weakness too, because the gases in our bloodstream are not correctly balanced.

This is something we have instinctively known for a long time. There is an ancient piece of wisdom which says '*control the breath, control the life.*'

For thousands of years, people have practised yoga and have observed that calming the breath, calms body and mind also.

Now neuroscience helps us understand why.

Breathing is linked to the autonomic nervous system. When we breathe in we engage the sympathetic nervous system. This is linked to our fight or flight response so we tense when we breathe in but when we breathe out, we engage the parasympathetic nervous system. This is rest and digest.

It is far easier for us as human beings to breathe out than breathe in, so when we breathe in, we tense and when we breathe out we relax.

If you slow your breathing down and allow for the out breath to be longer than the in breath you cannot help but begin to relax and you tap into the body's innate relaxation response.

So, it's a good idea to take time out each day to simply stop for ten minutes and quietly focus on your breathing, allowing it to settle and slow right down.

**Resource: The fusion model, Frances Masters.**



## How to Befriend Stress and Anxiety



## 3 MINUTE BODY SCAN

# MEDITATION



### 1<sup>st</sup> MINUTE

Sit upright, close your eyes and bring your attention to your body. Feel the weight of your body. Now take three deep breaths.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> MINUTE

Notice the sensations of your feet touching the floor and your back against the chair. Bring your attention to and soften your stomach. Soften your hands, arms, shoulders, neck and throat. Relax your face and facial muscles.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> MINUTE

Notice your whole body present. Take one more deep breath. Be aware of your whole body as best you can. Take one last deep breath and when you're ready, open your eyes.



## Guided Relaxation: Big Emotions & the Beautiful Dragonfly

### Ask a good friend to read this out to you

Close your eyes and take in a nice deep breath. Allow your tummy to fill up like a balloon and then exhale slowly.

Do this five times to really relax your whole body completely.

(Pause)

You'll notice how your body begins to feel deeply relaxed and sinks down further and further. Your legs begin to feel heavy too. Your arms now begin to feel heavy and very relaxed.

(Pause)

You enjoy every moment as your body continues to relax.

Imagine you're a beautiful dragonfly fluttering about the sky. You see the lovely green valley below you with lots of colourful flowers, just waiting for you to enjoy.

You feel the wind blow against your delicate, lacey wings. As the wind touches you, it gently blows away any worries, any stress you feel. Enjoy how wonderful it feels to be free. Your mind is so clear and calm. You are completely peaceful. You look so beautiful as you allow your true happiness to shine through.

Gliding on the peaceful wind reminds you that you can feel this way anytime you want. We all experience moments where we feel big emotions and that's ok.

(Pause)

But you also know that you can deal with those big emotions by breathing deeply, or slowly counting to 5 while you allow yourself to calm down a little before you talk things out with someone you trust.

All of these things help us keep calm and feeling good even when we feel very strongly about something.

We all experience many emotions every day. There is nothing bad about any emotion. We just need to realise that we are in control of the emotion and the emotion is not in control of us.

(Pause)

As you continue to fly along as a dazzling, beautiful dragonfly, notice now how the sun touches your body and warms you. The big, puffy clouds floating in the sky remind you how relaxed and calm you can be whenever you want, just by thinking about it.

The earth is a patchwork of colour and you enjoy each moment here, gliding along feeling so joyful and peaceful. You spread your wings far and stretch. It feels good. You are ready for an extraordinary day.

Take in a deep breath now and exhale slowly. When you are ready, give your body a big stretch.

With a clear, calm mind, say these words to yourself, “I am peaceful and I am calm, ready for a wonderful adventure in my day”.

## Useful contacts

### Young Minds Crisis Messenger

- Provides free, 24/7 crisis support across the UK if you are experiencing a mental health crisis. If you need urgent help text YM to 85258. All texts are answered by trained volunteers, with support from experienced clinical supervisors. Texts are free from EE, O2, Vodafone, 3, Virgin Mobile, BT Mobile, GiffGaff, Tesco Mobile and Telecom Plus.

### No Panic

- [www.nopanic.org.uk](http://www.nopanic.org.uk)
- No Panic are the people to call if you are suffering from panic attacks, OCD, phobias and other related anxiety disorders.
- Helpline: 0844 967 4848 (Daily 10:00-22:00 Charges apply)
- Youth Helpline for 13-20 yr olds: 0330 606 1174 (Mon – Fri 15:00-18:00 (Charges apply))
- Having a panic attack? Crisis number with recording of a breathing technique: 01952 680835 (24hr). Email: [admin@nopanic.org.uk](mailto:admin@nopanic.org.uk)

### Childline

- [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)
- If you're under 19 you can confidentially call, email or chat online about any problem big or small, free phone 24hr helpline: 0800 1111
- Sign up for a childline account on the website to be able to message a counsellor anytime without using your email address
- Chat 1:1 with an online advisor

## The Mix

- [www.themix.org.uk](http://www.themix.org.uk)
- If you're under 25 you can talk to The Mix for free on the phone, by email or on their web chat. You can also use their phone counselling service, or get more information on support services you might need.
- Free phone: 0808 808 4994 (13:00-23:00 daily)

## Youth Access

- 020 8772 9900  
Youthaccess.org.uk operates a network of membership organisations who provide local information, advice and counselling services. The Youth Access website and helpline can direct you to services in your area.

We hope that you found some of the ideas in this booklet useful. You can continue to use the techniques you found helpful long into the future and they should continue to benefit you. If some of the ideas are not particularly helpful at first, it is perhaps worth sticking with them for a few weeks to give them a chance to work. If however you feel your situation remains largely unchanged or if you did not find this booklet useful, you should speak to your GP who can tell you about the other options available which you could find helpful.

## Further Information and Resources

For further information and self-help resources go to Moodjuice online:

<http://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk>

Moodjuice is a website designed to offer information and advice to those experiencing troublesome thoughts, feelings and behaviours. In the site you can explore various aspects of your life that may be causing you distress and obtain information that will allow you to help yourself. This includes details of organisations, services and other resources that can offer support. This self help guide comes from a series that you can access and print from Moodjuice. Other titles available include:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Stress
- Panic
- Sleep Problems
- Bereavement
- Anger Problems
- Social Anxiety
- Phobias
- Traumatic Stress
- Obsessions and Compulsions
- Chronic Pain