

## Re-thinking Anxiety

Tips and techniques for overcoming anxiety

### Week one - Summary

When we feel stressed our body releases the chemical cortisol which triggers the 'fight flight' mechanism in our bodies. Fight or flight was a survival mechanism in primitive time but it's not so helpful nowadays when we don't have the same threats. Nowadays fight or flight is triggered when we are in a stressful situation.

We all experience stress and anxiety in different ways. Helping to identify what our stressors are can help to manage and prepare for stress. Noticing what happens to our bodies/thoughts/behaviour and feelings when we feel stressed can help us to be aware of when our stress or anxiety is triggered.



When something makes us feel stressed we tend to avoid doing it. This gives us a sense of relief in the short term but then causes our long term anxiety to grow.

When we feel stressed we can reach for quick fixes which make us feel better in the short term but tend to reinforce unhealthy habits. These can be in the form of sugary snacks, caffeine, drugs or alcohol. It can be helpful to identify our own quick fixes as these can be a signal that we are feeling overwhelmed.

Caffeine is a stimulant — and that can be bad news for someone with anxiety. Caffeine's jittery effects on your body are similar to those of a

frightening event. That's because caffeine stimulates your "fight or flight" response, this can make anxiety worse.

This week the techniques we looked at to re-think our anxiety were 'belly breathing' - a technique which teaches you to breathe from your diaphragm. Focusing on your breathing can stop anxiety in its tracks, so it's a technique worth mastering.

Self care is a vital part of staying well. When we are stressed, we can neglect ourselves but being kind to ourselves should be top of the list. Taking care of yourself physically, emotionally and socially can help you manage anxiety and feel good.

**Home Practice** As well as attending the course - It's helpful if you can complete the following exercises. We are all different, so thinking of your own examples will be most useful.

**What are the things that make you feel stressed (triggers)**

You can think of these as the things that trigger your fight and flight feeling.

My triggers:

E.g. Argument with Partner / Children playing up / Money worries / The News

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**What do you avoid doing?**

Eg. Driving on the motorway, making phone calls, organising finances, going out

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**What happens to you when you feel stressed?**

**Physical symptoms** (where in your body do you feel stress?)

E.g heart palpitations, bad back

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**What thoughts do you have?**

E.g. I'm, a failure, No body likes me)

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**How do you behave?**

(E.g. rushing, putting things off, withdrawing, drinking more alcohol).

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**How do you feel?**

e.g. tearful, scared, frustrated, argumentative.

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**What are your quick fixes?**

Most of us have something we turn to when we need a pick me up. Sometimes we can start to rely on these things and in the short term they bring a sense of relief but in the longer term they can have a negative impact on our physical and mental health.

E.g. Glass of wine when I get home from work

Sugary snacks / takeaways / avoidance

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**Are there any changes you can make?**

E.g. - Switching to decaf after mid day.

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Remember - this isn't about stopping doing the things you enjoy but more about being aware of when we use food / drink / substances to escape and avoid. By being aware of these things we can consider if what we're turning to is because we want to or is it a habit that we've become used to engaging in.

There are some useful helplines at the end of this hand out if you wish to access further support.

## Self-care

Taking care of yourself physically, emotionally, socially, spiritually, personally and financially can help you manage anxiety and feel good.

### How can you prioritise your own self-care this week?

You can consider things you've enjoyed in the past or something new.

These are the different types of self care to consider and following this we have included a fun activities catalogue for some ideas of things to do when you may be having a bad day.

| Types of self care   |   |  |   |
|--|---|--|---|
| Physical   | Emotional   | Social   | Spiritual   |
| Sleep<br>Stretching<br>Walking<br>Exercise<br>Healthy eating<br>Yoga | Stress management<br>Coping skills<br>Compassion<br>Therapy<br>Journaling | Boundaries<br>Support system<br>Positive<br>Social media<br>Communication<br>Friends | Time alone<br>Mediation<br>Prayer<br>Nature<br>Sacred space |
| Personal   | Space   | Financial  | Work  |
| Hobbies<br>Creativity<br>Goals<br>Identity<br>Authenticity           | Safety<br>Healthy environment<br>Stability<br>Clean Space                 | Saving<br>Budgeting<br>Money management<br>Paying bills<br>Boundaries                | Time management<br>Boundaries<br>Breaks                     |

### My Self Care plan - Don't forget to include 'What, when and where'

E.g - Take part in online quiz from on a Saturday from home.

Join in Valeways guided walk from Barry Island on Wednesday am.

Organise finances / set budget plan.

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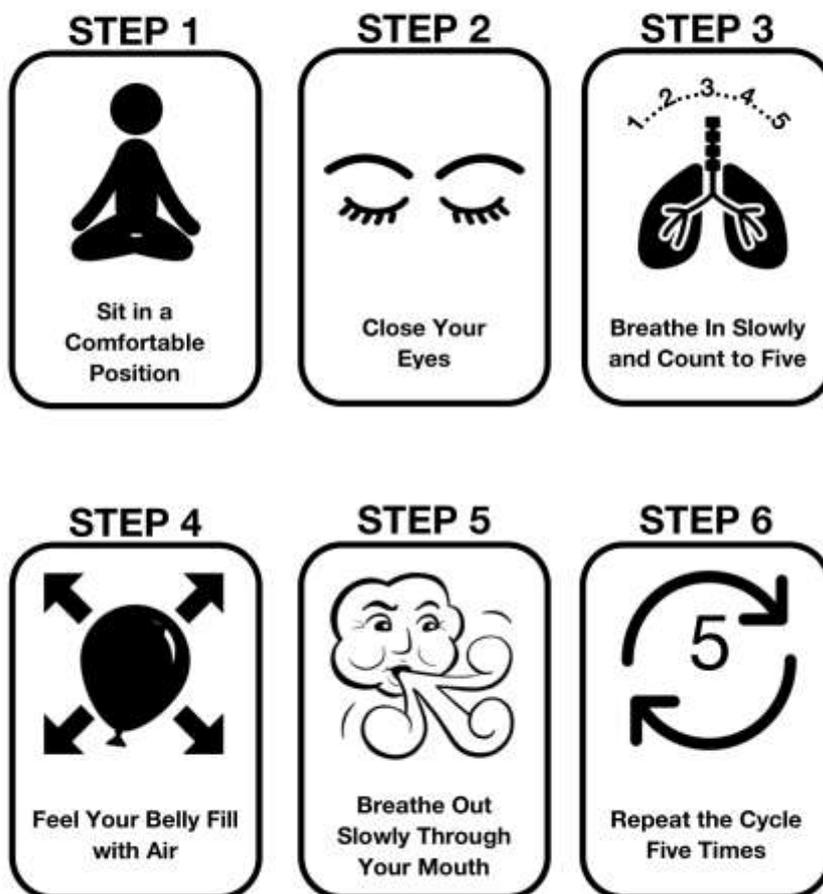
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## Belly Breathing.

Try doing 5-10 deep belly breaths once or twice a day. By practicing this skill, you can call upon it at any given time. When we focus on our breath, we are able to slow down our autonomic nervous system. You cannot feel both relaxed and stressed at the same time.

Why not try using this technique if you know you have something stressful coming up or as and when needed.

## 6 Steps to Belly Breathing



For online guided belly breathing and further relaxation audios - follow this link.

<https://stresscontrol.org/relaxation-mindfulness/>

## **Useful Help lines and Resources**

**Call helpline** (available 24/7 if you need to talk or are in a crisis).

0800132737 text 81066 <https://www.callhelpline.org.uk/>

**Samaritans** (available 24/7 if you need to talk or are in a crisis).

Call 116123 [Jo@samaritans.org.uk](mailto:Jo@samaritans.org.uk)

**Dan 24/7 Drug and Alcohol support -**

**0808 808 2234** Or text **DAN** to: **81066**

**Gam Care - 08088020133**