



# Connect: Unravelling and Navigating Anxiety Together.

Toolkit

# What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is what we **feel when** we are **tense**, **worried** or **afraid**-particularly about things that are **about to happen**, or which we think **could happen** in the future.

Anxiety is a **natural human response** when we feel threatened. We can experience this through our **feelings**, our **thoughts** and **physical** sensations.



Anxiety can affect us in many ways, impacting on how we feel, think and behave. **This toolkit** will enable you to **learn how anxiety is impacting you** and **how to manage it better**.

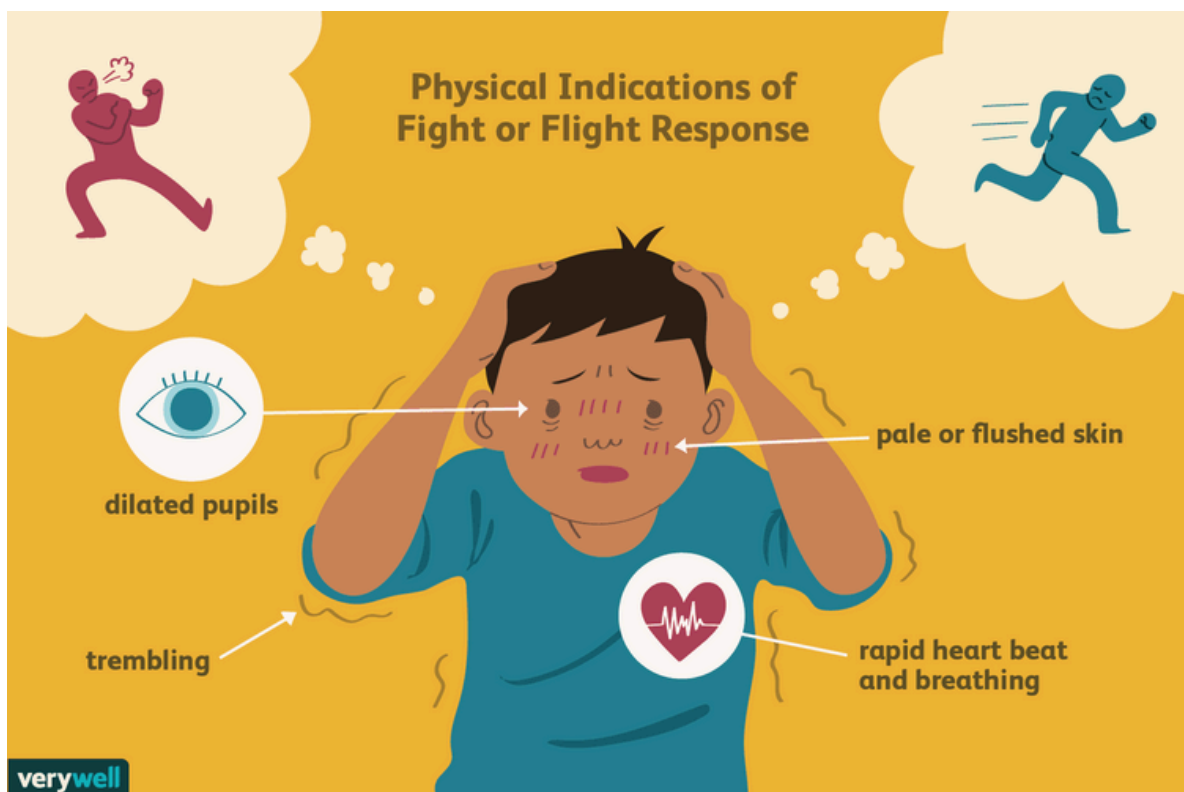
# How anxiety affects us.

There are four main ways anxiety can affect us.  
Identify which symptoms apply to you in each category.

How we feel	How we think
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Nervous</li><li>Irritable</li><li>Low mood</li><li>Low self-esteem</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Imagining the worst</li><li>Constant worrying</li><li>Lack of concentration</li><li>Going over &amp; over things</li></ul>
How we behave	How our body works
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Withdrawal</li><li>Acting irrationally</li><li>Outbursts</li><li>Loss of appetite or overeating</li><li>Increased drinking/smoking</li><li>Forgetfulness/clumsiness</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Headaches</li><li>Stomach/bowel issues</li><li>Sweating/dizziness</li><li>Muscle tension</li><li>Breathlessness/tingling in body</li><li>Dry mouth</li></ul>

# Fight, Flight or Freeze.

The ‘fight, flight or freeze’ response, the body’s response to stress and anxiety has evolved. It was originally meant to HELP us survive. Our bodies release hormones (adrenaline, cortisol) which will make us more alert and able to act quicker.



Learning how anxiety affects US personally is important: it will help identify our triggers and what coping strategies will help us most.

# Normal worry **VS** Excessive worry.

Low levels of anxiety can actually help us concentrate on a specific goal/task or identify something that needs to change. However, anxiety carrying on for long periods of time can cause serious health issues. It is crucial to seek help & support when this long-term anxiety intervenes with our daily lives.

For instance, you may:

- Have feelings of anxiety that are very strong and last a long time
- Have worries that are out of proportion given the situation
- Have worries that feel extremely distressing and out of your control
- The above will make it difficult for you to carry on with your day-to-day life.



Helps you to get what you want

Helps you to solve problems in your life

Leaves you feeling demoralised or exhausted

Gets in the way of living the life you want to lead

This can lead to general AVOIDANCE and WITHDRAWAL from activities that trigger your anxiety

# Techniques for Managing Anxiety.

## 1. STOP TECHNIQUE

- When you notice panic building, say STOP to yourself - out loud if the situation permits this.
- Breathe in gently
- Breathe out slowly, relaxing shoulders, arms and hands
- PAUSE
- Breathe in again
- Breathe out slowly relaxing forehead and jaw
- Pause then carry on with what you were doing, moving a little more slowly, talking more slowly, with your voice a little lower.

## 2. ANTI-ANXIETY BREATHING

- Short in-breath / long out-breath
- COUNT

## 3. ADOPT STRATEGIES

- Learn mindfulness skills
- Learn to think realistically
- Learn to confront the situations you avoid in small steps; graded exposure/desensitization.
- Adopt an anti-anxiety lifestyle

# Grounding Techniques.

Grounding techniques are designed to reconnect you with your surroundings, diverting your focus from distressing emotions or memories. They act to interrupt the spiralling thoughts that can cause—or worsen—anxiety

You don't always need to be in crisis mode to use grounding techniques. Incorporating them into your daily routines, perhaps during your morning coffee or evening wind-down, can enhance your overall mental wellbeing.



## Body

Lay on the ground, press your toes into the floor, squeeze playdough



## Self-soothe

Take a shower or bath, find a grounding object, light a candle, feel something soft



## Breathe

Practise 4-7-8 breathing: inhale to 4, hold for 7, exhale to 8.



## 5 Senses

Wear your favourite sweatshirt, use essential oils, make a cup of tea



## Observe

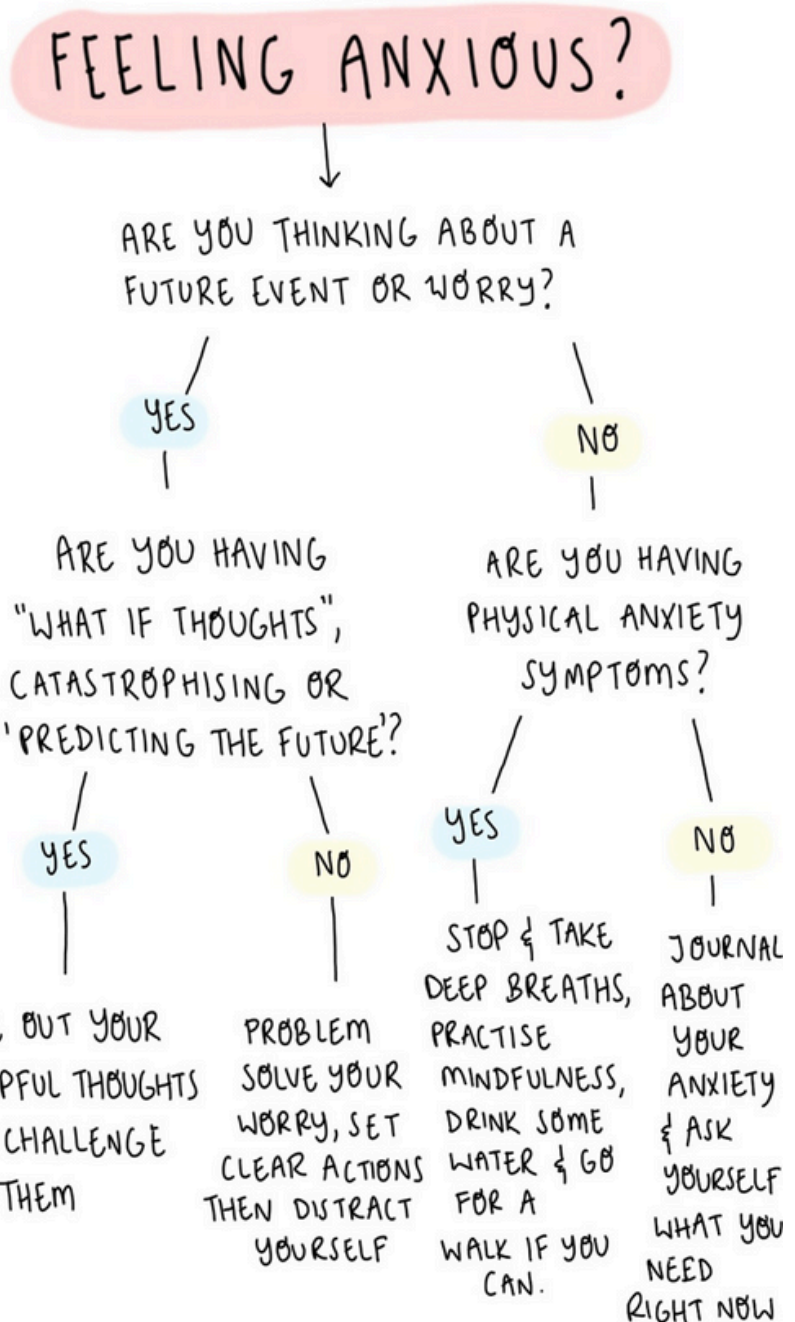
Describe an object in detail: colour, texture, shadow, light, shapes, size, weight



## Distract

Find all the square or green objects in the room, count by 7s, say the date

# Learn to reassess and challenge your anxious thoughts.



It can feel difficult to change the way we have been dealing with anxiety. No one is expecting you to manage this overnight. Practicing some of the techniques we've looked at whilst remembering to be kind to yourself will help.

Remember that you are not alone, no matter how isolating anxiety feels. Connecting with others going through similar experiences will empower you, making it easier to challenge the unhelpful, intrusive thoughts that can feed your anxiety.

## Additional Resources.

If you'd like to speak to an Advisor about anxiety, give NABS a call on 0800 707 6607 between 9am–5.30pm or email [support@nabs.org.uk](mailto:support@nabs.org.uk). We aim to respond to all calls and emails within 48 hours.

[Anxiety UK](#)

[No panic](#)

[Social Anxiety UK](#)

If you require any further support you can contact the NABS  
Advice Line team for free confidential, safe and impartial  
advice: [support@nabs.org.uk](mailto:support@nabs.org.uk) / 0800 707 6607

