

Support Guide

Anxiety



Anxiety and Panic

This self-help sheet will explore some of the issues around anxiety and panic and some simple techniques that you can try to help you deal with these feelings should they occur.

What is Anxiety

Anxiety is something everyone experiences on occasions and feeling anxious is a perfectly natural response to some situations or events. It can be exciting or inspiring, helping to motivate us to get things done. However, at times feelings of anxiety can be persistent, overwhelming or out of proportion to the situation. When this happens it can start to affect your daily life. We all experience anxiety in different ways:

- Psychologically, as fear, nervousness, not being able to concentrate, feelings of numbness
- Physiologically, as heart rate, stomach churning
- Cognitively, as frightening or negative thoughts e.g. I'm going to fail/make a fool of myself/ lose control .

Anxiety can affect our actions by causing us to put off or stop work, avoiding people or situations, not sleeping, loss of appetite or eating for comfort.

What is Panic

Severe anxiety may develop into panic, more commonly known as panic attacks. It is your body's normal, but exaggerated response, to a stressful situation. You may feel intense dread, experience various physical symptoms (not feeling able to breathe, dizziness, chest pains, trembling, sweating, etc.) and have extreme thoughts of losing control, going mad, having a heart attack or, in severe cases, even dying. Although panic attacks can be very frightening, they are not actually harmful per se people do not have heart attacks, develop psychiatric illnesses or die from them and will pass in time.

Anxiety



How to handle it ?

- Remember that a panic attack will end and is not dangerous.
- Remind yourself about previous occasions when you handled a similar situation or attack well.
- Instead of thinking about what might happen (which could generate more frightening thoughts), focus on the present and be aware of the things around you observe their shape, colour, sounds etc, many individuals finds this helps them to regain control.
- Stop what you are doing and slow yourself down for a moment. Focus on deep, gentle and slow rhythmic breathing.
- Picture someone offering you calm encouragement and focus on positive, peaceful and relaxing images.
- Many individuals find that taking a deep breathe, stretching out and then flopping into a relaxed position can help . You may find that the process of carrying out these actions takes you mind off your feelings and helps you to feel calmer.
- If you are able, take some gentle exercise e.g. go for a walk. Exercising releases releases endorphins. They can trigger a positive feeling in the body and can help to reduce your anxiety.

How can you help yourself?

- ✓ Understand your anxiety

Thoughts, feelings and behaviour continually affect one another. It is easy to develop a negative pattern, where unhelpful thoughts lead to unhelpful feelings and actions. Try to keep track of what you are doing and how you feel, some people find that keeping a diary is useful. This will help to detect what is affecting you and what you need to take action on or be aware of.

- ✓ Challenge your anxious thoughts. Catch it, check it, change it!

Try to recognize the negative thoughts and challenge them. Look at them in different perspectives.

Imagine the situation where your friend would confide to you thinking this way. Try to replace the negative thoughts with the positive ones, it's about learning to think more flexibly and in a more controlled way. By catching the thought, checking it and seeing if you can change it. With practise you can help break the negative cycle.



✓ Make time for worries

Everyone worries. Clear your head and write the worries down on paper and see if that helps. If you feel that worries are taking away your day, it can help to manage it and set up for yourself some 'worry time'. Schedule it into your day as you would any other activity. When the negative thought reaches you throughout your day, you can set it aside for your 'worry time'.

There is a structured Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) technique called 'The Worry Tree' which can help you to stay focus on solutions. You can find more information on 'The Worry Tree' [here](#) and/or try an App version [here](#).

✓ Shift your focus

Some people find relaxation, mindfulness, breathing exercises and yoga helpful. They cut the tension and focus our awareness on he present moment.

Face the things you want to avoid. It's easy to avoid situations, or rely on patterns that make us feel safer, but these can keep anxiety going. By gradually building up time in uneasy situations, anxious feelings will reduce, and you will see that these situations are tolerable.

✓ Get to grips with the problem

When you are feeling stressed or anxious, it can help to use a problem-solving technique to identify some solutions. This can make the challenges you're facing feel more manageable. The Clinical Education Development and Research (CEDAR) department at The University of Exeter has produced a pdf to help individuals with move from problems to solutions. These tips can help you to manage feelings of anxiety. In addition we would also recommend that you get enough sleep, try to live a healthy lifestyle and foster healthy relationships, read self-help books, take regular exercise and practice breathing techniques. If, however, you feel your anxiety is affecting your daily life, causing you distress and isn't improving you could consider seeking further support.

Speak to someone at **the BUE Student Hub Counselling Service** where advisors can help you with the techniques above.

You can pass by our offices at the BUE Library Lower Floor.

Not on campus and want more information? You can contact us anytime via our email address **thestudenthub@bue.edu.eg**

The student Hub is a safe, friendly and free space for you. We are here to help you. We are listening.

