

**A GUIDE TO OVERCOMING
ANXIETY**



**BEATING
YOUR
WORRIES**



Anxiety is when people feel particularly worried, scared and fearful.

Everyone feels worried and nervous at times and this is normal, but when these worrying thoughts start to takeover and you can't get it out of your mind it becomes anxiety.

If you are feeling anxious you are not alone. Lots of children and adults will have difficulties with anxiety.

This booklet offers tips and ideas about managing your anxiety

WHAT'S THE POINT OF ANXIETY?

Anxiety is a normal emotion and helps to keep us safe in dangerous and life threatening situations. When you feel anxious your body releases a chemical called adrenaline to help your body fight or run away, this is called the fight or flight response.

Adrenaline makes you very alert, aware and on edge. It makes your heart beat faster to pump more blood to your muscles and makes you breathe more quickly and take short breaths to try and get more oxygen into your blood to help you run or fight. It can make you feel shaky and sweaty.

If you were a caveman being chased by a sabre-tooth tiger your anxiety would help you think and run faster, jump higher and see and hear better...it might just save your life.

Once the danger has passed your adrenaline levels will go back down and you will feel normal again.

So anxiety is really important in keeping us safe when we need it.

Thankfully real dangers very rarely occur nowadays. Anxiety still helps to keep us safe but it can also be very good at finding something to worry about even if there is nothing scary or dangerous around you.

YOUR FEELINGS

We have lots of different feelings and sometimes it is hard to put into words exactly how you feel.

Take a look at the feelings below, do any of these match how you are feeling now? Perhaps you feel more than one of these emotions at the moment. If none of these match, add your feelings to the list.



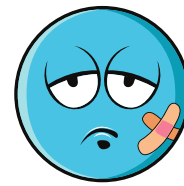
Happy



Worried



Excited



Hurt



Scared



Bored



Angry



Confident



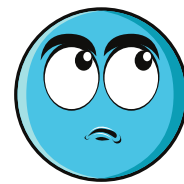
Ill



Chilled



Frustrated



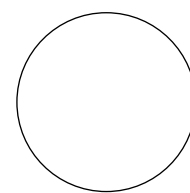
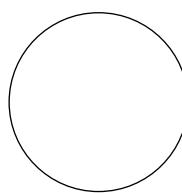
Thoughtful



Silly



Sad



You can add other emotions here

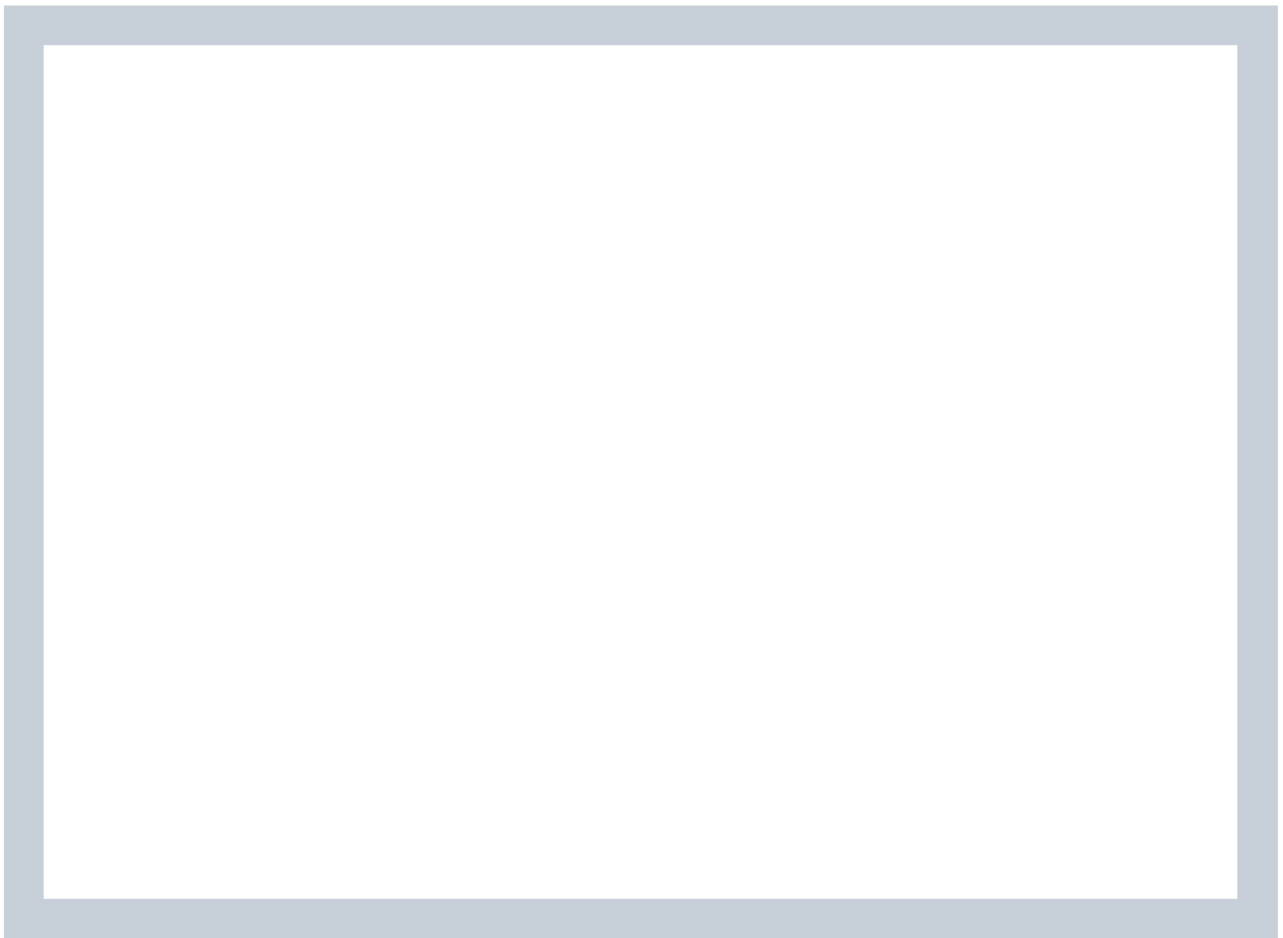
DRAW ANXIETY

Anxiety likes to find things to worry about.

Why not have a go at drawing what your anxiety looks like in the box below. It might be a monster, gremlin, blob or a cloud.

You could colour your anxiety in, write on it, scribble or stick things on it.

There is no right or wrong, it's about understanding what anxiety looks like for you.



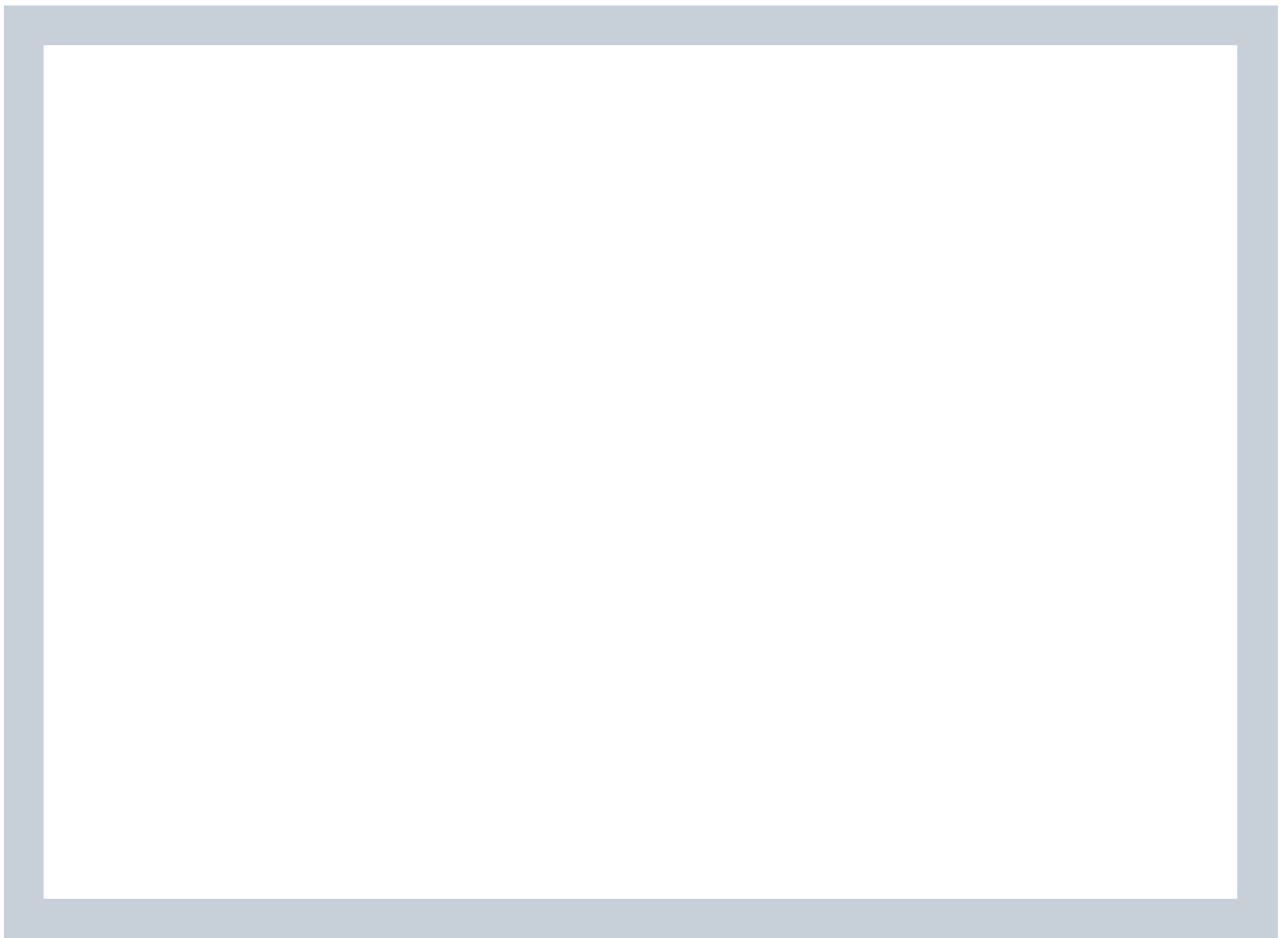
Now we know what your anxiety looks like, you can tell your anxiety to be quiet, to stop talking or to go away until you can get rid of it.



DRAW HAPPINESS AND CALM

Have a go at drawing the opposite to your anxiety, what does happiness and calm look like for you?

You could give them names and let your happiness and calm creature make your anxiety smaller.





Thoughts are something that happens in your mind. Good thoughts, funny thoughts, angry thoughts and worries are all things your mind creates. They aren't real. You can't touch or smell your thoughts, they are just there inside your mind. But we respond to them like they are concrete facts rather than just ideas.

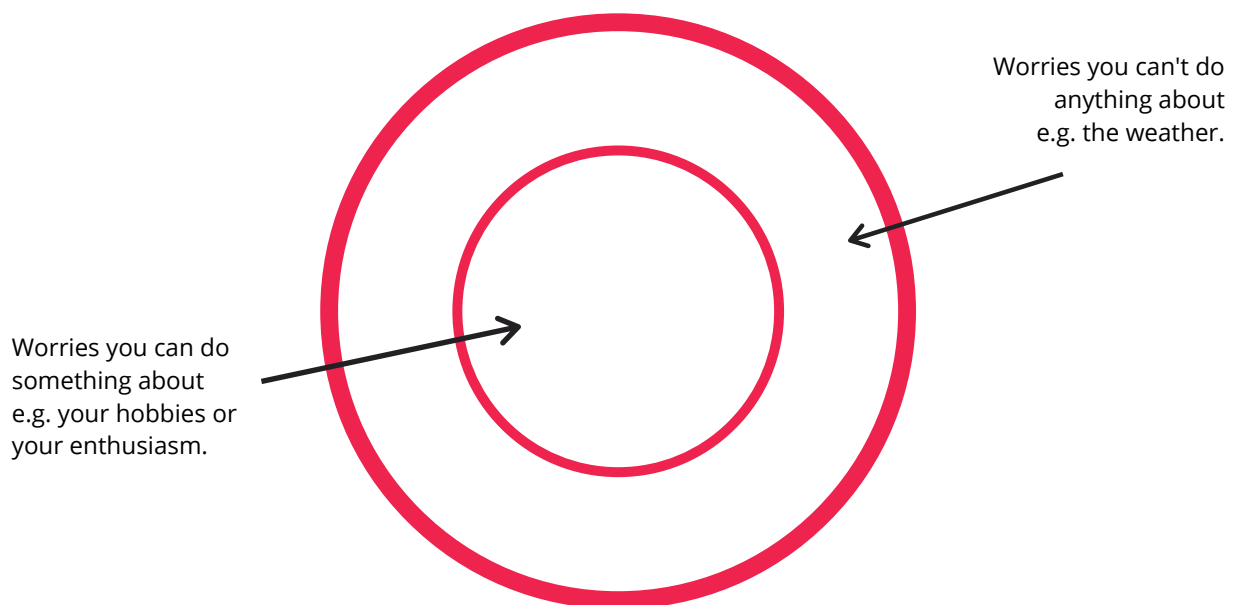
However real or scary they may seem, our thoughts aren't facts.

SORT YOUR WORRIES

When we feel anxious we have more worrying thoughts and we may start to worry about lots of different things.

Draw two circles like below and write down all your worries in them. If you can do something about the worry, like setting your alarm so you don't wake up late or practising for a test, then that worry goes in the middle circle.

If you are worrying about something that you can't do anything about, such as it raining on your birthday or a friend not liking your favourite movie, then it goes in the outside circle.



Let yourself stop worrying about everything in the outside circle. You can't do anything about them so forget them.

THE WORRY DECISION TREE

For all the worries in the middle circle use the worry decision tree.



BREATHE

There are lots of different ways to manage and reduce anxiety. One of the quickest ways to do this is by distracting your mind.

You can do this by choosing to focus on something else, it can be as simple as focusing on your breathing.

Slowing your breathing down by taking long breaths in and out relaxes you.

TRY THIS

Here is a simple exercise that you can do anywhere, at any time.

- Stretch your hand out so your fingers are spaced comfortably apart.
- Use the pointing finger of your other hand to trace up and down your fingers.
- Breathe in as you trace up.
- Hold your breath as you trace over the tip of your finger.
- Breathe out as you trace down.
- Do this until you have traced all your fingers and thumb.



3 SECONDS

As we have found earlier, when you feel anxious your body releases adrenaline which makes you want to breathe in and out quickly.

To calm your body breathe in through your nose for 3 seconds and feel your chest rising. Breathe out through your mouth for 3 seconds.

Keep doing this until your breathing becomes steady, your heart slows down and you feel calm.

A GOOD BOOK

Find a quiet place and get a fairly big book, but not one that will squish you!

Lie down, open the book and put it face down on your tummy.

Take long steady breaths in and out, breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth.

Focus your mind on the book, watch it rise and fall as you breathe and feel it on your tummy. Your mind will try to think about other things and when it does this bring your attention back to the book. Do this until you feel relaxed.

TALKING

TALKING HAND

On each finger of the hand opposite write the name of someone who you feel you can talk to about your worries.

These five people can all give you support so don't be afraid to talk to them and ask them for help especially when you are feeling worried and anxious.



TALKING IS IMPORTANT

When you are feeling anxious and worried talking to someone can really help.

Find someone on your helping hand and talk to them or any grown-up that you trust. The person you talk to can comfort you, give you ideas on how to cope with your worries, support you or help you put your thoughts into perspective.

If worries are seriously affecting your life it can be a good idea to speak to your GP.



4, 3, 2, 1...

When you feel anxiety building up inside it can be really scary.

Try to distract and calm your mind with a simple counting exercise.

Look around you and find:

- 4 things you can see
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can touch and
- 1 thing you can smell

Counting things and using your senses keeps your brain busy and distracted. A busy brain means you have less time for anxious thoughts.

MINDFULNESS

WHAT IS IT?

Mindfulness is about focusing on and paying attention to the present moment, your thoughts, feelings and what is happening.

When you pay close attention to the present you don't worry about things that have happened or worry about things that might happen in the future. Our anxious thoughts like to look into the future and predict bad things happening, mindfulness keeps your brain busy with what's happening now allowing it less time for anxious thoughts.

Here are a couple of mindful activities that you could try.

MINDFUL COLOURING

When you are drawing or colouring think about the things you can hear, feel, or smell.

Listen to the sound of the pencil on the paper, feel the texture of the paper, the ridges of the pencil and the difference between the point and the side of the pencil.

Smell the wood of the pencil, the wax of your crayon or the ink of your felt tips. Take your time and notice all the small details.



GO OUTSIDE

Find somewhere comfortable and safe to sit outside, or you could sit inside near an open window.



Close your eyes and take long slow breaths.

Listen to the noises around you. How many are there? What type of noises are they? Where are they coming from? Try and make a map of the noises with you in the middle.

Move your focus to your sense of touch. Feel the ground or the chair beneath you, how does it feel? Can you feel the wind on your skin? Is the wind only catching parts of you? Is the sun warming your face? Does your face feel the same temperature all over or are parts hotter or cooler than others? Is there anything else you notice?

Now see if there is anything you can smell. How many different smells are there? When you are ready open your eyes.

You can use all your senses or just pick one.



STOP WORRIES BUILDING UP

WORRY TIME

Give yourself a set time each day to think about your worries. During this time you can look at what is worrying you, what you can do about it and perhaps talk to someone about your worries or write them down and what you are going to do about them. Decide how long you will think about your worries and stick to it, the goal is to spend less time thinking about your worrying thoughts and feeding the anxiety.

If you have a worrying thought at any other time in the day, write it down so that you can think about it during your 'worry time' then carry on with day.



EXERCISE

Exercising is great for your body and mind. When you exercise your body releases feel good chemicals called endorphins.

YOUR HAPPY PLACE

Think of your favourite place or create a place in your imagination that you can think about whenever worrying thoughts start to build up.

Fill the place with details. What's there? What's the weather like? Is there anyone else there? Where do you eat and sleep?

Keep visiting the 'Happy Place' in your mind and add to it or change things, this way when you feel anxious it will help to relax you.

SLEEP

Getting the right amount of sleep is really important when beating anxiety, but it can be difficult to get to sleep if worrying thoughts are keeping you awake.

Here are some tips you could try if you have problems getting to sleep:

- Avoid screens. Try not to look at a phone, tablet, computer or TV screen before you go to bed.
- Have a warm bath or shower before you go to bed. The warm water will relax your muscles, and as you cool down your body's processes slow down making you feel relaxed.
- Try a little light exercise before bed, you could stretch, go for a walk or try yoga.
- If worries come into your head when you are trying to sleep write them down. You can let them go until the morning or forget about them completely.
- Stick to the same bedtime during the week and weekends so your body knows when it's time to sleep.

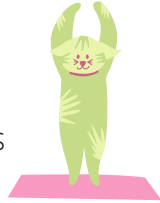


RELAXATION EXERCISES

SUN SALUTATION

1 Stand up tall.

2 Breathe in and lift your hands above your head.



3 Breathe out taking your arms out to the side and bend your body forward and try to touch your toes with your fingers.

4 Breathe in, with your hands on the floor take your right foot back and then your left foot back so you are in plank position.

5 Breathe out and lower your body to the floor.

6 Breathe in and lift your chest off the floor.



7 Breathe out and lift your bottom into the air so you're in a v-shape.



8 Breathe in bringing your right foot forward.

9 Breathe out bringing your left foot forward.

10 Breathe in as you stand up tall lifting your arms over your head.

11 Breathe out bringing your hands down together in front of you.



PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

This exercise is good for lowering anxiety and helping you sleep. Although it has a fancy name it is basically just tightening or squeezing your muscles then relaxing them.

Start at your feet and work your way up your body tightening the muscles and then relaxing them an area at a time.

- Feet - point your toes
- Lower leg – pull your toes towards you
- Upper leg – squeeze your thigh muscles
- Hand – make a fist
- Arm – bring your hands towards your shoulders to “make a muscle”
- Bum – pull in your bottom muscles
- Stomach – suck your stomach in
- Chest – take a deep breath
- Neck and shoulders – move your shoulders up to touch your ears
- Mouth – Open your mouth wide
- Eyes – squeeze your eyelids tightly shut
- Forehead – Raise your eyebrows as far as you can.

FIGHT YOUR WORRIES

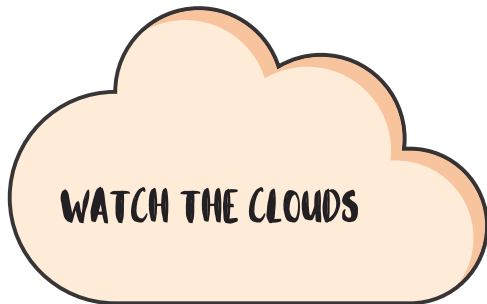


SCRIBBLE THE ANXIETY AWAY

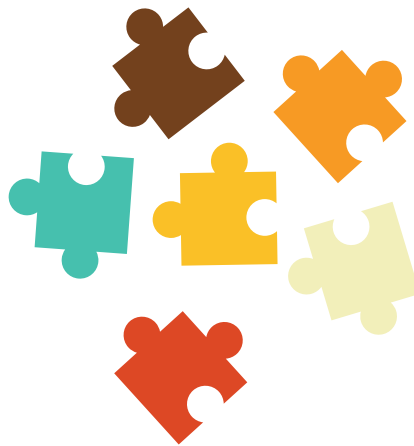


JUMP AROUND

Exercise is great for releasing feel good chemicals in your brain



WATCH THE CLOUDS



LAUGH



MEDITATE

Or try yoga or tai chi - there are lots of videos online

PUZZLES AND GAMES

Distract your mind with jigsaws, puzzle books and games



FACETIME A FRIEND

ACTIVITIES

WORRY BOX

Writing down your worries helps you to stop thinking about them so why not make a box to throw all these worries into. Maybe it could look like a monster who gobbles all your worries up.

You will need a box (or something that you can put your worries into), pens, decorations and glue. Decorate your box however you want, it could be a machine, a robot, a monster or whatever you like. You could even make one out of fabric. Let your imagination go wild!

SEED BOMBS

You will need meadow flower seeds, compost, powdered clay (or clay soil if you have it), water and a mixing bowl.

To make your seed bombs mix together 1 cup of seeds with 5 cups of compost and 2-3 cups of clay powder or clay soil. Then slowly mix in the water with your hands until everything sticks together. Roll the mixture into firm balls and leave them in a sunny spot to dry. Once the balls are dry it's time to throw them at any bare parts of the garden and wait to see what grows!

You could make these seed bombs and then throw them into the garden when you are feeling angry; get rid of your frustration and plant some beautiful flowers – it's a win-win!

CALM BOX

A calm box will contain lots of different things to relax you when you are feeling anxious. You will need a box or a bag and nice things for your senses. You could include your favourite book, photos or something you like looking at, something you like to listen to and lavender scented items or another smell you find relaxing. You should also include different textures to touch, these could be bubble wrap, stress balls, a teddy or fidget toys, whatever works for you.

If you are struggling to sleep perhaps your family could fill the box up each day with things to help you relax at bedtime.

GLITTER JAR

You will need a jar, glitter glue, glitter and water.

Fill your jar about a quarter of the way up with glitter glue (you can use a clear glue if you want). Then add a tablespoon of glitter to the jar. Fill the jar with warm water until it is as close to the top as you can get without it spilling. Seal the lid as tightly as possible, you can use a hot glue gun to line the lip of the jar if you wish. Shake the jar really well until all the glue from the bottom mixes with the glitter. Watch the glitter swirl around until it gently settles at the bottom again.

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