

Worry, Stress and Anxiety



This leaflet is to explain a little about what anxiety, worry and stress is, what it feels like, what might cause it and some things you can do that can help.

It is important to remember that feeling anxious, worried or stressed is normal, you might refer to it as being worried, feeling tense or stressed.

This feeling is a normal response to situations that feel or appear threatening to us, at a certain level anxiety can be beneficial and help us to perform well or cope with an emergency.

Too much anxiety is not helpful, this can occur when we feel unable to cope with or resolve the situation. Our body will try to deal with the situation by triggering the Fight, Flight or Freeze response which leads to physical symptoms some of which you may recognise or have experienced -

Fast heart beat - Dizzy, light headed - Short of breath/fast breathing - Butterflies in stomach or feeling sick - Sweating -Tingling in hands/feet.

When this happens you may begin to have thoughts such as -
'I'm losing control' - 'I'm going to faint' - 'I'm having a heart attack'

You may find it hard to concentrate, difficult to relax, become irritable, emotional, struggle to work/sleep and avoid uncomfortable situations, and adopt unhelpful habits such as smoking, drinking, drugs.

There are many causes of anxiety

It may be as a result of early experiences, a series of stressful events, illness, divorce, bereavement, redundancy.

Pressures at work, financial, family or relationship worry and problems.

Anticipating bad news or events.

Sometimes a cycle of anxiety can develop.

How can you manage your anxiety?

There are two areas you can begin to consider and practise yourself.

- Understanding what anxiety (stress) is and look at some of the causes.
- Reducing the physical symptoms.

Understanding

Thinking about what causes your anxiety (stress) - sometimes writing it down or keeping a diary can help. It will identify areas that you can work on or seek help if it is too much for you to cope with on your own.

Talk to someone - if you don't feel you can speak to family or friends, speak to your GP - support may be available through the NHS.

Think about lifestyle - can you reduce the pressure on yourself. Do you look after yourself? Eat a wellbalanced diet, make sure you get enough sleep, take time for yourself - Find a hobby you enjoy, take regular exercise and learn to relax.

Physical symptoms

Relaxation - by recognising the early signs of tension and using a technique that works for you, you can prevent the symptoms escalating.

Relaxation can be in a variety of forms - Yoga, Qigong or Tai chi are gentle forms of exercise which teach breathing and can help if you enjoy joining a class. CDs or apps provide a variety of relaxation techniques which can be followed at home.

Breathing techniques can help slow down your breath and heart rate. App' and You ube clips can help you at home. Yoga, Qigong and mindfulness classes may be available locally to try.

Complementary Therapies such as massage, reflexology, reiki and aromatherapy can help to provide some time out and relaxation. (Check with your Dorothy House key worker to see if you can access these at Dorothy House)

Exercise can help by increasing your overall health and sense of well-being. Regular participation in exercise has been shown to decrease overall levels of tension, elevate and stabilize mood, improve sleep, and improve self-esteem. About five minutes of aerobic exercise can begin to stimulate antianxiety effects. Other things that might help -distraction techniques such as listening to music, watching TV, or reading a book.

If you have tried these techniques and they have not worked for you -further help can be accessed through your GP, or your local Talking Therapies service. This may vary depending on the area you live in. Your GP should have information about what is available in your area.

Useful websites/App

Anxiety Care UK: www.anxietycare.org.uk

Anxiety UK: www.anxietyuk.org.uk

Mind: www.mind.org.uk

Mindfulness and meditation down loads

www.headspace.com -A free taster of mindfulness with buy in options

Calm -a series of free guided meditations and sleep stories with buy in options

SAM - Self Anxiety Management - a free app, with advice and techniques

See other leaflets in the series for relaxation techniques, breathing techniques, sleep and acupressure.