

**Anxiety - Whatever it is that scares you, here are 10 ways to help you cope with your day-to-day fears and anxieties.**

## **1. Take time out**

It feels impossible to think clearly when you're flooded with fear or anxiety. A racing heart, sweating palms and feeling panicky and confused are the result of *adrenalin*. So, the first thing to do is take time out so you can physically calm down.

Distract yourself from the worry for 15 minutes by walking around the block, making a cup of tea or having a bath. When you've physically calmed down, you'll feel better able to decide on the best way to cope.

## **2. What's the worst that can happen?**

When you're anxious about something – be it work, a relationship or an exam – it can help to think through what the worst end result could be. Even if a presentation, a call or a conversation goes horribly wrong, chances are that you and the world will survive. Sometimes the worst that can happen is a panic attack.

If you start to get a faster heartbeat or sweating palms, the best thing is not to fight it. Stay where you are and simply feel the panic without trying to distract yourself. Placing the palm of your hand on your stomach and breathing slowly and deeply (no more than 12 breaths a minute) helps soothe the body.

It may take up to an hour, but eventually the panic will go away on its own. The goal is to help the mind get used to coping with panic, which takes the fear of fear away.

## **3. Expose yourself to the fear**

Avoiding fears only makes them scarier. If you panic one day getting into a lift, it's best to get back into a lift the next day. Stand in the lift and feel the fear until it goes away. Whatever your fear, if you face it, it should start to fade.

## **4. Welcome the worst**

Each time fears are embraced, it makes them easier to cope with the next time they strike, until in the end they are no longer a problem. Try imagining the worst thing that can happen – perhaps it's panicking and having a heart attack. Then try to think yourself into having a heart attack. It's just not possible. The fear will run away the more you chase it.

## **5. Get real**

See over

Fears tend to be much worse than reality. Often, people who have been attacked can't help thinking they're going to be attacked again every time they walk down a dark alley. But the chance that an attack will happen again is actually very low.

Similarly, people sometimes tell themselves they're a failure because they blush when they feel self-conscious. This then makes them more upset. But blushing in stressful situations is normal. By remembering this, the anxiety goes away.

## **6. Don't expect perfection**

Black-and-white perfectionist thinking such as, "If I'm not the best friend/student/pupil/son/daughter in the world, I'm a failure," or, "My DVDs aren't all facing in the same direction, so my life is a mess," are unrealistic and only set us up for anxiety.

Life is full of stresses, yet many of us feel that our lives must be perfect. Bad days and setbacks will always happen, and it's essential to remember that life is messy.

## **7. Visualise**

Take a moment to close your eyes and imagine a place of safety and calm – it could be a picture of you walking on a beautiful beach, or snuggled up in bed with the cat next to you, or a happy memory from childhood. Let the positive feelings soothe you until you feel more relaxed.

## **8. Talk about it**

Sharing fears takes away a lot of their scariness. If you can't talk to a partner, friend or family member, call Rotherham General Hospital on 01709 820000 and ask for the Crisis Team who are available 24/7. Or call a helpline such as the Samaritans 08457 90 90 90, also open 24 hours a day. And if your fears aren't going away, ask your GP for help. GPs can refer people for counselling or to CAMHS.

## **9. Go back to basics**

A good sleep, a wholesome meal and a walk are often the best cures for anxiety. The easiest way to fall asleep when worries are spiralling through the mind can be to stop trying to nod off. Instead, try to stay awake.

Many people turn to alcohol or drugs to self-treat anxiety with the idea that it will make them feel better, but these only make nervousness worse. On the other hand, eating well will make you feel great physically and mentally.

## **10. Reward yourself**

Finally, give yourself a treat. When you've picked up that spider or made that call you've been dreading, reinforce your success by treating yourself to a candlelit bath, a massage, a country walk, a concert, a meal out, a book, a DVD, or whatever little gift makes you happy.