

Anxiety Awareness and Advice

May 15-21 is Mental Health Awareness Week and this year The Mental Health Foundation hopes to increase people's understanding and awareness of anxiety.

Experiencing occasional anxiety is a normal part of life. However, people with anxiety disorders frequently have intense, excessive and persistent worry and fear about everyday situations. These feelings of anxiety and panic interfere with daily activities. It can be difficult to control, are out of proportion to the actual danger and can last a long time.

Dealing with anxiety can be hard. But there are some things we can do to manage these tough feelings.



Breathe

Concentrating on the feeling of your body as you breathe in and out and counting the in-breath and out-breath can help you focus your thoughts. Gradually slow your breathing down and lengthen each out-breath.



Journal

It's important that we acknowledge our worries. Writing down what's happening in your life and how it's affecting you can help you understand what is triggering your anxiety. It's also important to be kind to yourself and notice the good things too so also keep a note of what's going well.



Get active

Doing something physical releases cortisol which helps us manage stress. Being physically active also gives your brain something to focus on and can be a positive coping strategy for difficult times. This includes gentle exercise such as walking and yoga as well as more vigorous activities such as running, weights and swimming.



Challenge your thoughts

Anxiety can lead us to think about things over and over again. This is called 'rumination'. When you catch yourself ruminating, try to write down the thought and challenge it; this can stop it from overwhelming you. Is what you're worrying about true? Have you had similar thoughts which have not turned into reality?



Spend time in nature

There are now multiple studies showing that spending time in nature can help us feel calmer and less anxious. It reduces blood pressure, heart rate, muscle tension, and the production of stress hormones.



Sleep

Getting better rest and sleep may help combat anxiety, yet having a good night's sleep is hard when your head is full of worries. Steps to improve sleep include making your bed more comfortable, eliminating sources of light and noise, and avoiding caffeine and alcohol in the afternoon and evening.



Connect with people

Anxiety can feel very isolating so connecting with other people can help a lot. Also saying what's worrying you out loud can bring a new perspective.



Eat well

Sugary snacks, junk food, caffeine and alcohol can all exacerbate anxiety. Eating healthy food at regular intervals helps us to balance our blood sugar which in turn helps to regulate our moods.

GUK has an Employee Assistance Helpline - **0800 328 1437** - for you and your family, to give you access to trained specialists if you need support with mental health and wellbeing, and we also offer free counselling sessions.

Your line manager can also provide support, so make sure you tell them if you are having any challenges and they will be able to assist you.



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