

How to be your own feelings detective

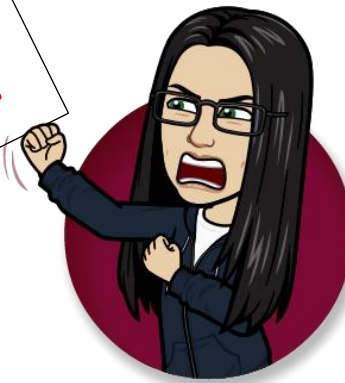


Anxiety

What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is a strong feeling of worry and fear that happens when you're nervous about a situation, when you feel unsafe, or when you're not sure what is going to happen next. Just like with any other feeling, having some anxiety is normal. Anxiety can even be helpful at times. It can let us know that something may be wrong. It makes us prepared and tells us that we should be careful or more cautious about certain situations. Anxiety triggers our brain's stress response system.

Fight



Attack before you get attacked and win the fight fast.

Flight



Run when there is no hope of winning the fight.



Stay silent, become invisible and uninteresting

Freeze

Faint



literally freeze and play dead

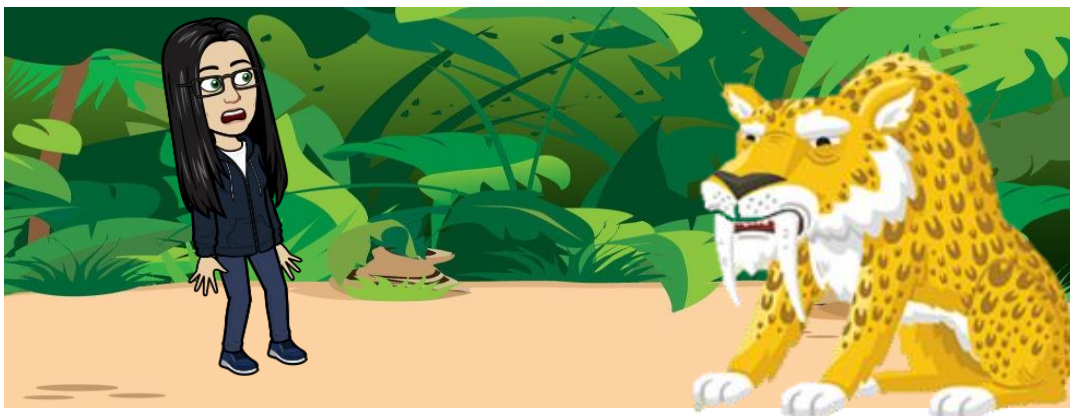
Caveman Brain



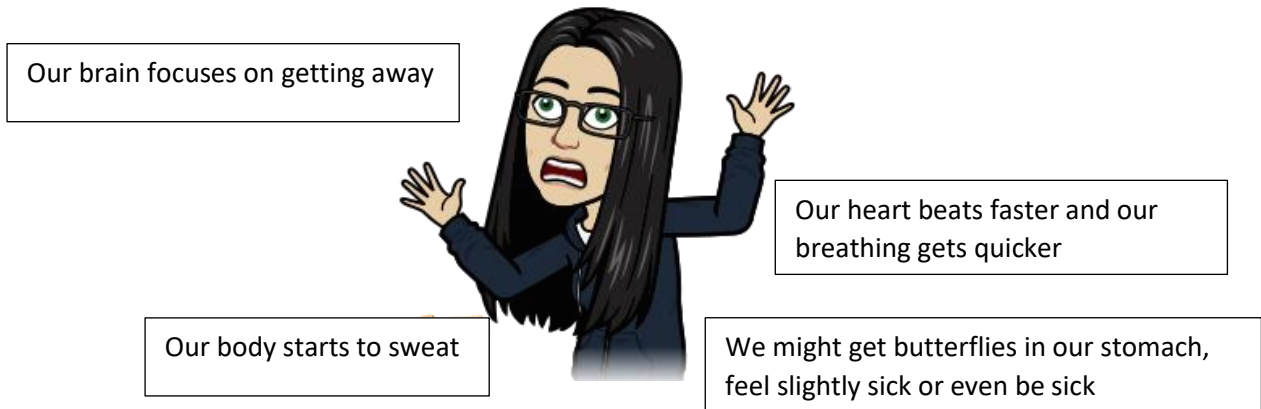
The problem is, our brains are **still wired** much like our stone-age ancestors. Our bodies have a build in survival instinct from over 50,000 years ago, when we were living in the Stone Age.

Let's go back to those days... imagine you are out walking, looking for food when a sabretooth tiger jumps out in front of you.

"That sabretooth tiger looks like he wants **free-range human** for breakfast. Better grab my spear or get 'outta here!"



When we see something that scares us, our brain tells us something frightening is about to happen. Our brain then gives our body instructions- so it then gets ready to run fast.



We will explore more about these changes further on in the booklet! These changes are useful when you are in danger. These changes can save your life as they help us to react quickly and run away.

We now live in modern cities free of wild lions, tigers, and bears — our school stress, friendships, and family still trigger our **"fight or flight"** response. You may be seeing tigers where they don't exist...

Do you feel anxious at school?

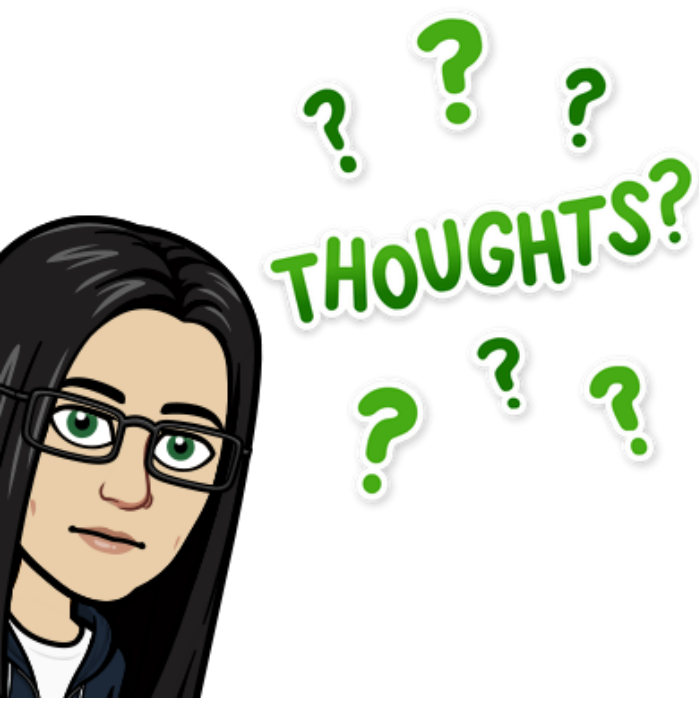


Do you get feelings of anxiety at night? You may get these feelings at night and struggle to sleep. Your brain will leave you lying awake, worrying about what you could have done differently that day and what scary things will happen tomorrow, and you may also think about worrying things that will happen in the future.

Anxiety can start to make you think and believe that bad things are really going to happen. Anxiety works by tricking your brain into only focusing on all the things that could go wrong. If you lose control of anxiety, it can start making you feel like you don't want to go places or be with other people. People who are **really anxious** can often stop focusing on what is going on here and now and spend a great amount of time and energy worrying about the all the negative things that might happen in the future.

When you are anxious do you notice how your body responds? Do you react the same way as if you were in a dangerous situation? You might also experience other feelings along with anxiety such as sadness, anger, or hopelessness. With all of this going on, it can be quite difficult to cope with anxiety.

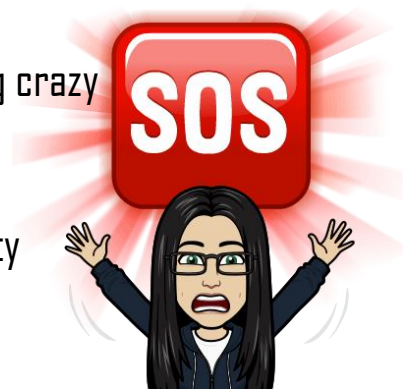
As you work your way through this booklet, you will learn more about how anxiety can impact your thoughts, body, and emotions. But don't worry - you'll also learn some fantastic strategies on how to cope with it in a positive and healthy way!



Is My Anxiety A Problem?

Do you think that your anxiety is becoming a problem? Place a tick next to each statement that is true for you. Answer as honestly as you can!

- People tell me that I worry way too much
- I spend a lot of time thinking about things that may never happen or that I can't control
- I have a hard time changing my thoughts when I'm anxious
- It's hard for me to fall asleep most of the time because my mind is always racing
- I've talked myself out of doing something I really wanted to do because of my anxiety
- My anxiety is hurting my relationships with my friends and family members
- There are places that I don't go or things I don't do because of my anxiety
- When I get anxious, I sweat, shake, can't breathe, and my heart races
- Small things seem like a really big deal to me sometimes
- When I get 'really anxious', I feel like I'm losing my mind and going crazy
- I worry about the same things over and over again
- I have a hard time concentrating sometimes because of my anxiety
- After worrying all day, I feel very tired
- I worry a lot about what other people might be thinking or saying about me
- I get 'really anxious' when things don't go the way I planned, or things aren't in order
- I always feel like I'm 'on edge' or that something is about to happen
- If I have an upcoming event, I worry about it for days or weeks ahead of time
- When I'm anxious, my behaviour changes i.e. I become 'grouchier' and 'snap' at people



If you have agreed with most of those statements, then your anxiety may be a problem for you

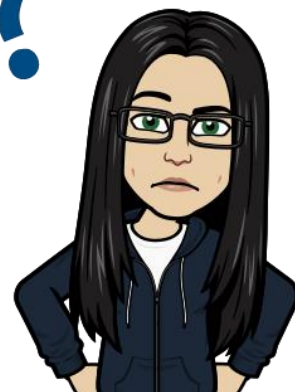
Anxiety questions...

Answer the questions below to explore more about your anxiety affects you

What are some things your anxiety has stopped you from doing?

What would be different if I wasn't anxious?

Where and when do I feel anxious the most?

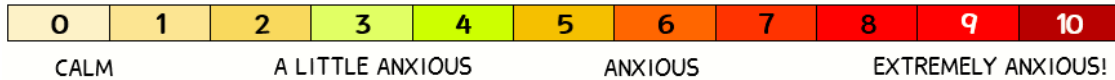


How does my anxiety affect other people?

My Anxiety Triggers

A trigger is something that happens that makes you feel anxious.

Look at the list below to figure out which ones are triggers for you. Place a number between 0-10 showing how anxious each situation would make you. In the blank spaces, write in three anxiety triggers that are a **10** for you.



- _____ When I think someone might be mad at me
- _____ Trying new things, meeting new people, or going new places
- _____ Having too much work to get done
- _____ Talking or performing (think class assemblies) in front of a lot of people
- _____ Something happens that I wasn't expecting
- _____ Not knowing what is going to happen in the future
- _____ Being away from home/family/loved ones
- _____ Being around certain people (Who? _____)
- _____ Taking a test or a quiz
- _____ Going certain places or doing certain things alone
- _____ Going to school _____



10! _____

10! _____

10! _____

Write or Talk about why you rated each one the way that you did...

Anxiety and my body

The body's alarm system when the brain perceives a threat, it activates the body's "fight or flight" alarm system, and adrenaline is released into the blood from the adrenal glands. We experience uncomfortable feelings because the adrenaline makes the body systems speed up, diverting blood towards the big muscles, preparing us to attack (anger) or escape (anxiety).

How does anxiety affect your body? Read the different body responses below, and colour in the ones that happen to you whenever you start to feel anxious.

Brain hijacked

Thoughts race which makes it hard to think clearly & rationally. Feelings of being "unreal" or detached.

Head dizzy or light-headed.

Result of our faster breathing.

Breathe fast & shallow.

Helps us take in more oxygen, which is then transported around the blood system. Sometimes experience a choking feeling.

Stomach churns

Adrenaline reduces blood flow and relaxes muscles in stomach and intestines (blood diverted to limb muscles) causing nausea, butterflies or churning

Muscles tense

Blood, containing vital oxygen and glucose energy, is sent to the big muscles of the arms and legs – ready for fight or escape. Can also cause aches & pains.

Bladder relaxes

Inner sphincter muscle relaxes so we might feel urge to pass urine. Outer sphincter remains under conscious control (except in rare terror situations).

Eyes widen

Allows more light in – improves (or blurs) vision.

Mouth dries

Caused by narrowing of the blood vessels.

Heart beats faster & palpitations.

Blood pressure and pulse increase as the heart pumps more blood to muscles, allowing us to run away or attack

Body heats & sweats

A side effect of all the speeded-up systems is that the body rapidly heats. Sweating allows the body to cool again, and to become more slippery to allow escape.

Hands tingle - legs tremble or "Jelly legs".

Blood is diverted to large muscles, and small blood vessels constrict, causing tingling, trembling or numbness.

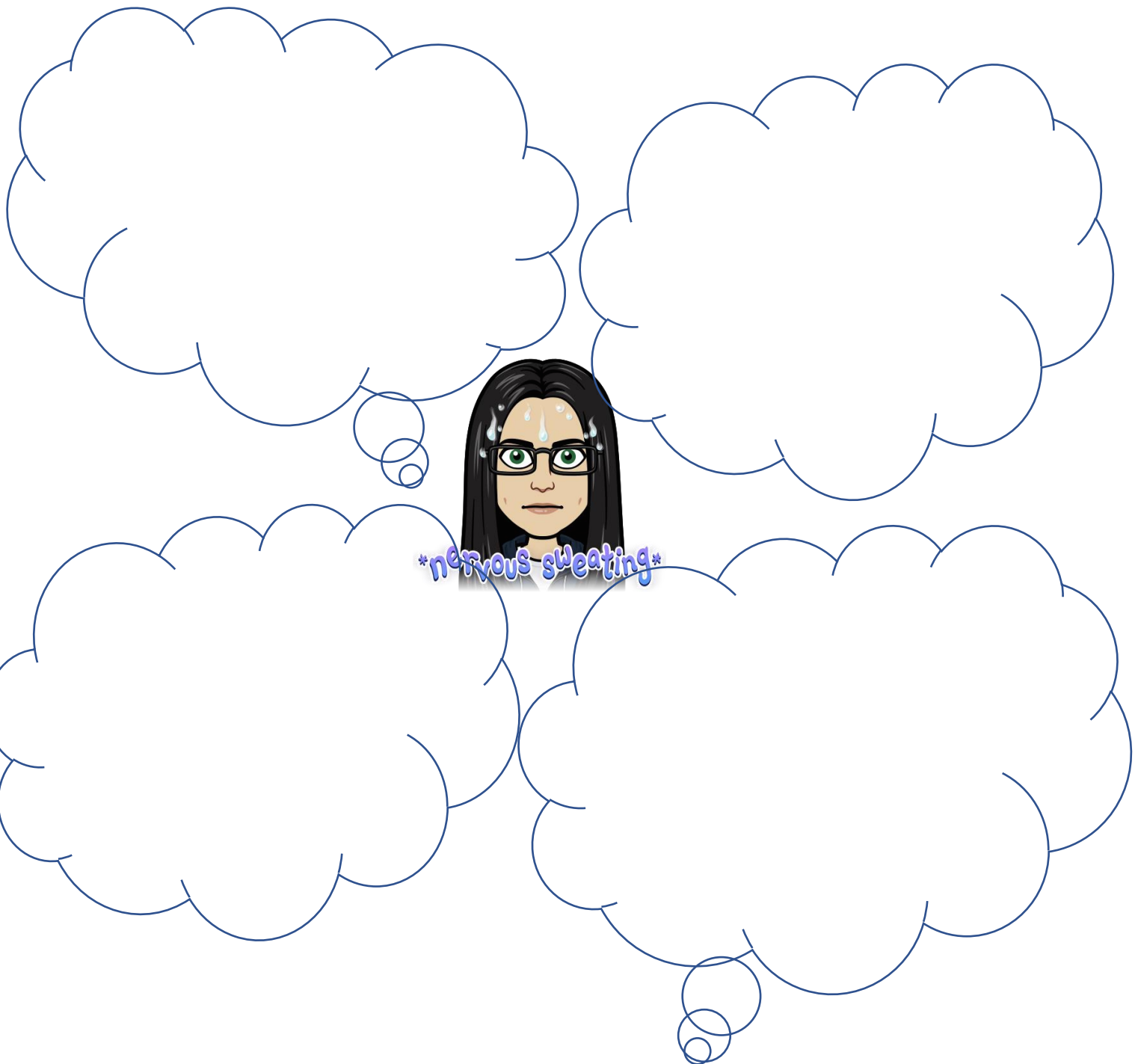


Anxious thoughts

Our thoughts play a big part in making us feel less or more anxious. When we're anxious, we usually can't help but to think about all the bad stuff that might happen. Our anxiety can trick us into believing that the some of these negative thoughts are true! It can even make some situations seem worse than they really are.

When we're anxious, we can also have all of these thoughts happening at the same time. This can be exhausting! Have you ever experienced this? Think of situations that make you feel anxious.

Write down some of the anxious thoughts that you have in the thought bubbles below.



Stinkin' thinkin'

A thinking error happens when we think about things or situations in a way that is not helpful and can only make us feel more anxious. This is also called stinkin' thinkin'. Which ones do you do? Share examples of times when you've done stinkin' thinkin'!



Mind reading

Believing you can tell what others are thinking about you!

No one said anything about my new haircut. They must hate it!

Catastrophising

Thinking that the worst possible thing is about to happen.

I'm late to swim practice.

I'm going to be dropped from the class.

Black or White thinking

Thinking that things must be perfect or else it is a failure.

I got 18 out of 20 on a test, it might as well be 0 out of 20.

Personalisation

Taking something that happens and making it about you.

Mum looks cross today, I must have done something wrong

Filtering

Only focussing on the bad things even when good things happen too.

We got first place but remember I missed those shots!

Labelling

Calling yourself a name because you didn't reach a goal or made a mistake

I didn't put my name on my worksheet. I'm so dumb.

Anxiety and my feelings

Anxiety can also bring up more negative feelings. There's a small selection of feelings listed below. Colour in or tick the ones that you experience when you're feeling anxious. Use the blank circles to write in some other feelings that aren't listed.



Exhausted

Embarrassed

Panicked

Awkward

Overwhelmed

Worried

Afraid

Moody

Lonely

Stressed

Coping skills

A coping skill is the way that you choose to deal with whatever feeling you are experiencing.

A good coping skill for anxiety is one that can get rid of negative thoughts, calm your body down, and help you feel better!

A poor coping skill usually just makes you more anxious and isn't very helpful at all.

Below, share about good and poor coping skills that you use or have used to cope with your anxiety.

Good coping skills I use when I'm anxious

These coping skills help me feel happy and less anxious



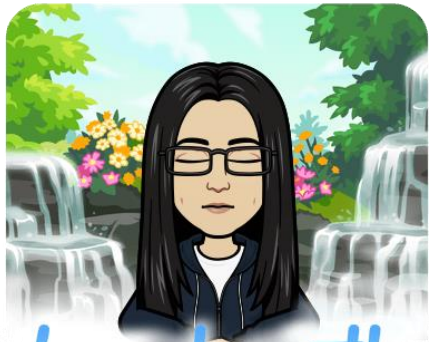
- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____

Poor coping skills I use when I'm anxious

These coping skills don't work for me and make my anxiety worse

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____

Now we can start learning about helpful ways to cope with anxiety...



Mindfulness

deep breaths

When you're feeling anxious, it is usually about something that you think might happen in the future. Mindfulness is a way of changing your thoughts away from future worry and instead focusing on the things that are happening in the moment—right now! The next time you feel yourself becoming very anxious about a situation, try out these mindfulness exercises.

Grounding

Use your five senses to refocus on the present. See if you can name...

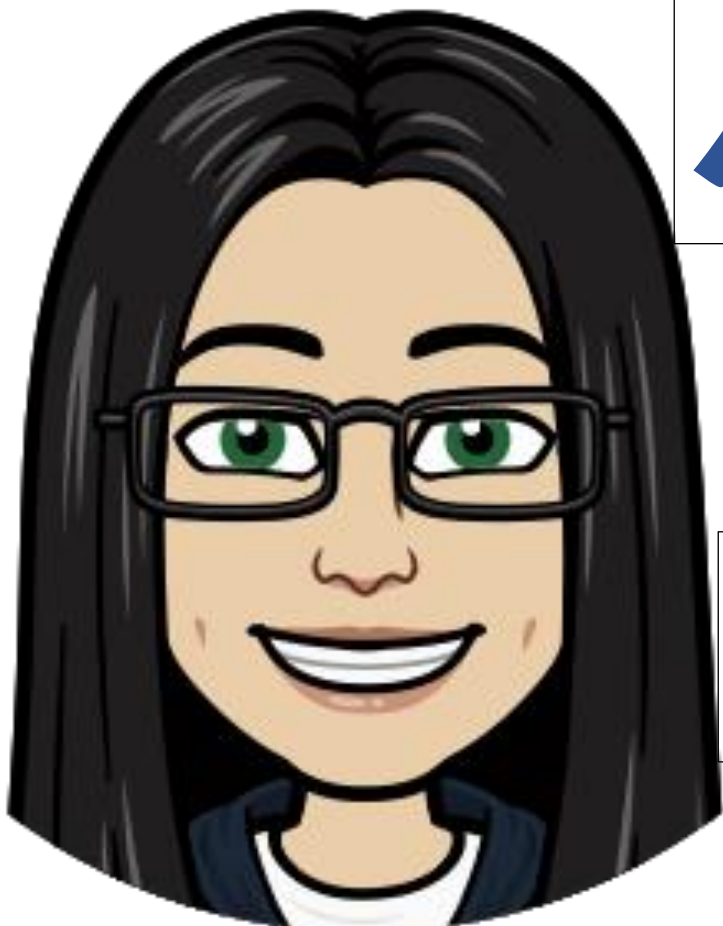
5 things you can see

4 things you can hear

3 things you can feel

2 things you can smell

1 thing you can taste



Focus on breathing



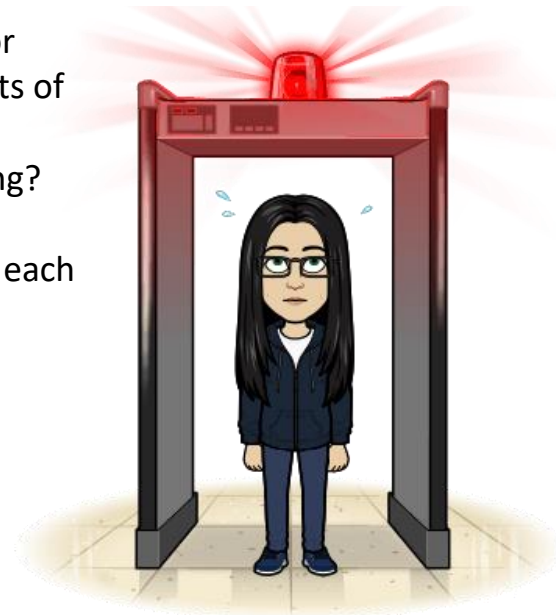
When you're anxious, it can feel like it's getting harder to breathe. Your breaths become shorter and quicker. A helpful way to calm your body down is to focus on your breathing. Take deep and slow breaths. Imagine the air going in and out of your body. Pay attention to your belly and chest getting bigger as you breathe in. When you breathe out, imagine that you're breathing out all your negative thoughts and feelings.

Body scan

A body scan is something that can be done while laying down or sitting up. You are focusing your attention on the different parts of your body.

Start by thinking about your feet. Do they hurt? Are they tingling? How about your ankles?

Continue to move your way up your body just focusing on how each part is feeling in the moment.



Visualisation



Visualisation is a type of daydreaming where you use your imagination to help you calm down and feel less anxious. By closing your eyes, you can picture yourself standing in a place that you find to be relaxing, such as a beach. Try to focus on what is going on around you. Imagine that you can hear the waves and feel the warm sun on your skin.

Challenging your thoughts

You've learned that sometimes your anxiety might try to get you to believe things that may not be true and can make small things seem like a big deal. Instead of letting your anxious thoughts take over, fight back by challenging them! Use the questions below whenever your mind starts to focus on the bad things that might happen.

Am I **stinkin' thinkin'**? Which one?



Is there anything I can do about it? Then do it!

Yes, it could happen but what are the chances it will?

Will this be a big deal to me next week?



Is it a fact/true or is it anxiety?
How do I know it's true?



Is there anything that proves something bad is going to happen?

When was the last time what I fear would happen actually *did* happen?

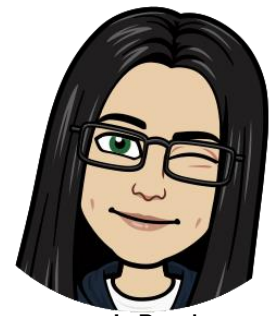
Are those thoughts helping me feel better?

What happened last time I had those thoughts?

What's a better outcome that can happen?

How can I be prepared if things don't go the way I hope?

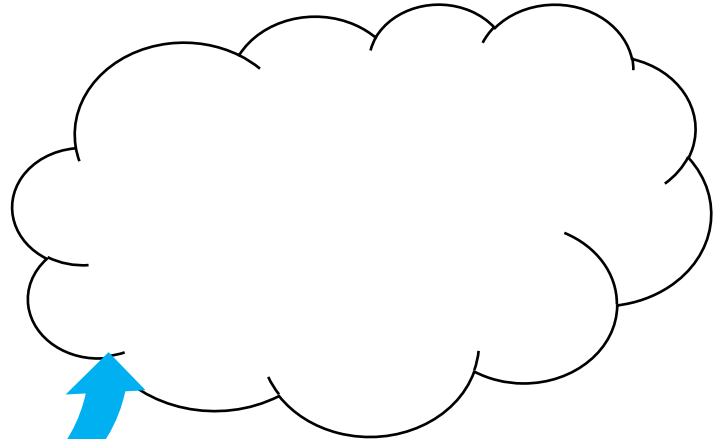




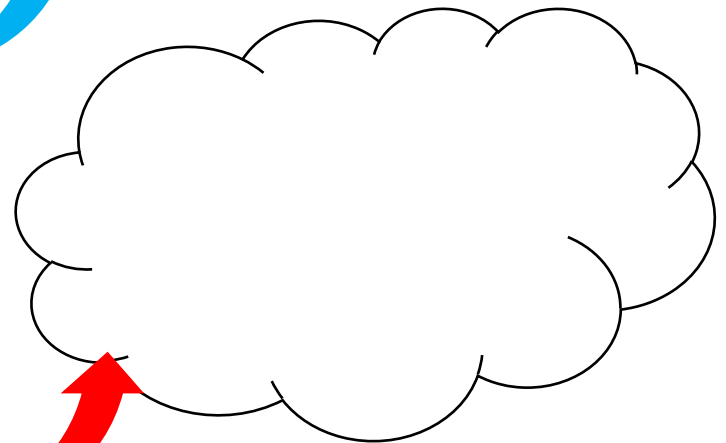
Positive thoughts

Once you've challenged your anxious thoughts, you can try to change them into positive ones! Do this by thinking of what you could say to make yourself feel better about the situation. Read the first two examples of anxious thoughts and practice changing them into positive ones. Then do your own!

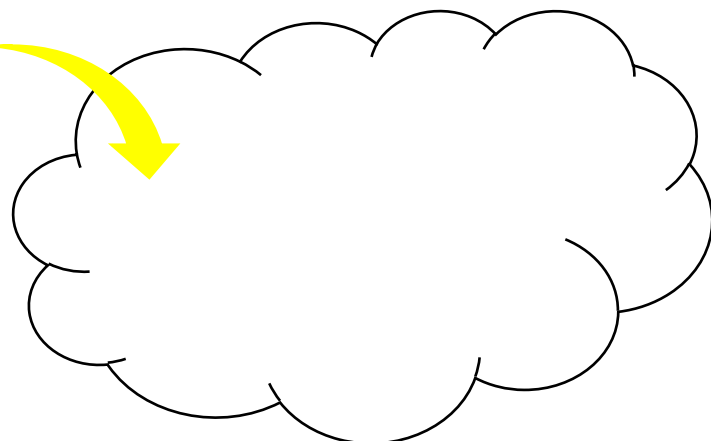
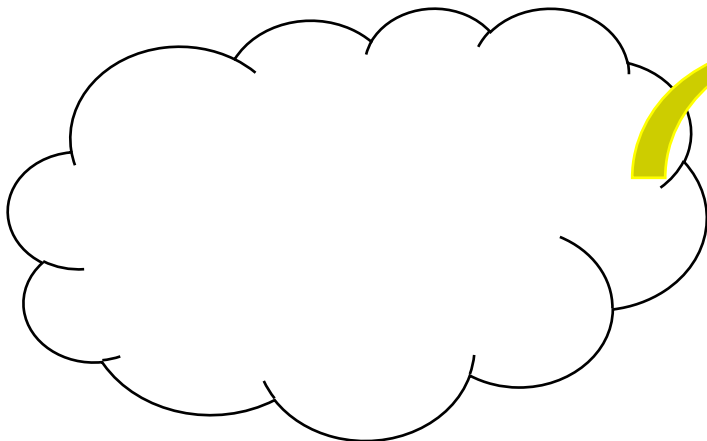
I'm so nervous about my solo talk. I'm probably going to mess up and everyone will laugh.



My friend didn't turn around when I said her name. She probably doesn't want to be my friend anymore.



What are anxious thoughts you have had? Write one down and change it into a positive!



Thought record

A thought record lets you keep track of your anxious thoughts and helps you practice changing them into positive ones. Use the thought record below to write down your unhelpful thoughts throughout the week. See if positive thinking works for you!

What made me feel anxious?	What thoughts did I have?	How did those thoughts make me feel?	What positive thoughts did I try?	What ended up happening
Surprise Maths test	I'm not ready. I didn't get to study. I'm going to fail.	Sad Nervous Scared	Try your best! You're going to do great!	I stayed calm and passed the test!



Anxiety prep

Once you know what your anxiety triggers are, you can prepare yourself for any upcoming situation that you know might make you feel anxious. Being prepared means creating a plan of action on how to cope to help get prepared, ask yourself the questions below! Read the example after, and then think of a situation you could prepare for.

What's my anxiety trigger?

How will I know I'm getting anxious?

Which coping skills can I use when it happens?

How will I know if it worked?

Jo is feeling anxious about the school play. It's her first time acting in a play, and she is worried that she will mess up and forget her lines. Jo knows that her anxiety will probably get worse right before it's time to say her lines. The night before, she creates a plan of the best possible scenario! Jo tells herself that before she goes out on stage, she'll picture herself doing a good job. When it's time to say her lines, she'll focus on her breathing so that she won't feel so anxious. The next day, during the play, Jo puts her plan into action! She feels herself getting anxious, but she can calm down by using the coping skills she came up with the day before!

what's wrong with me |



What's my anxiety trigger?

How will I know that I'm getting anxious?

What coping skills can I use when it happens?

How will I know if it worked?



More Coping Skills

LET ME KNOW



Laugh

Doing things that make you smile, and laugh can help distract you from your thoughts and put you in a less anxious mood.



Talk to someone

Talking to someone is often a good way to cope with feelings. It can be helpful just to have someone listen to what you're going through. Make sure to let them know if you want them to just listen or if you're looking for advice.



Eat, sleep, Exercise

Keeping your body healthy and active is a positive way of coping with anxiety.

Make sure that you are getting enough sleep at night and eating healthy meals.

Exercising can also help you feel better when you're feeling stressed or anxious.

Best case scenario

Cope with your anxiety by thinking about the best-case scenario! Instead of focusing on the worst that can happen, picture everything going just as you'd hope.



Go outside

Sometimes just being outside can change your mood. This is also a great way to practice mindfulness. Focus on the plants, trees, and animals around you instead of the things that are making you anxious.

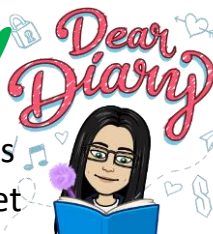


Clean your room

Listen to your parents when they tell you to clean your room! Sometimes when things around you are neat and cleaned up, that can help you feel calmer and less stressed.

Keep a diary

Journaling is when you write down your thoughts and feelings. This helps with anxiety because you're able to get everything out of your head and onto the paper.



Be around positive people

The people that you are around can help change your mood. Try to put yourself around others who are positive, not ones who are 'stinkin' thinkers!



Goal setting

Learning to cope with the things or situations that make you anxious can seem hard or maybe even impossible. It can be helpful break your actions down into small steps you can take until you reach your goal.

What are some steps you can take to start coping with your anxiety?

	What will I do?	How did I feel after I did it?	What ended up happening?	Was it as bad as I thought it would be?
Step 1				
Step 2				
Step 3				

Aimee gets anxious at school. She doesn't talk much to the other kids in her class because she's afraid of what they might say. Aimee decides to start taking steps to cope with her anxiety.

- Step 1: Smile at a classmate.
- Step 2: Start a conversation with someone during gym.
- Step 3: Ask to sit next to a classmate during lunch.



What's Helpful?

Your friends and family members probably want to help you feel better whenever you're feeling anxious. But sometimes they might accidentally say or do something that makes things worse! It is important for you to let them know what you need them to do or what you need them to say that would help with your anxiety. Tick below what you need from others when you're feeling anxious.

When I am anxious, I need someone to...

Give me advice and tell me what to do

Tell me everything will be ok!

Stay close

Give me time or space

Ask me questions

Tell me to 'calm down'

Tell me a joke or try and make me laugh

Say nothing. Just listen

Try to distract me from the problem

Be anxious with me

Tell me how they would handle it

Help me change my thoughts

Tell me its not a big deal

Put their arm around me

What else do you need from others?



Remember!

Feeling anxious is normal and can even be helpful. It becomes a problem when it starts to keep you from doing things that you need or want to do.

It is important to remember that anxiety will try to trick you into believing things that may not be true. It can make a situation seem worse than it really is. It can be hard to cope with anxiety because you might believe these things to be true in the moment. It is important to know that you're feeling anxious and start challenging these thoughts right away!



- You can use your body changes as warning signs for your anxiety.
- This is the best time to use any of the coping skills you learned in this booklet.
- If you know you might be doing something that will make you feel anxious- you should always keep a coping skill in mind.
- Practice the coping skills- the more you practice, the easier it will be to deal with a trigger
- Use your family members and friends to support you- let them know how you feel, they will be help so you don't have to deal with the feelings of anxiety all the time.

You are not alone!

CREDITS

NHS Low Intensity Anxiety Management

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/mental-health/anxiety-disorders-in-children>

CAMHS

Google

