



Relaxation

This leaflet is designed to help those suffering from panic attacks and anxiety

Positive self-statements for coping with anxiety

■ Preparation

It's not going to be as bad as I think

It won't last long and I can cope with it

I might enjoy it if I go

It's better to go than not go. Worry doesn't help

If I do get bad feelings, I know they won't last long and I can cope with them

I am getting better and need to rebuild my confidence

■ Coping

Concentrate on what is going on

This is just anxiety; it is an unpleasant feeling but I've never been ill

Concentrate on what I have to do

Remember to relax and think positive

The feelings always pass away

I can tolerate anxiety; I've managed many times before

I know I am going to be OK

The feelings are unpleasant but not harmful or dangerous

■ Praise

I coped with that

I did that well

I handled that; it should be easier next time

If I keep this up I'm going to get really good at this

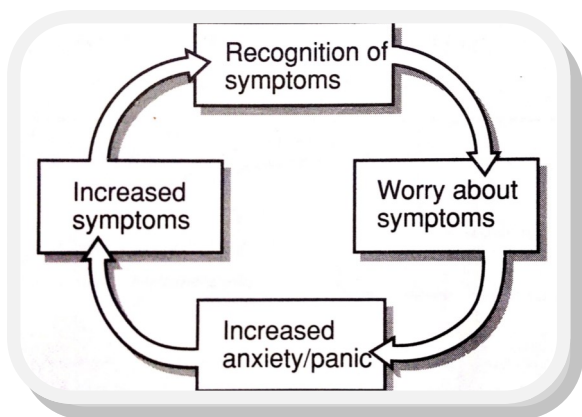
I can be pleased with the progress I am making

I achieved that; I'm getting better

This will be the first of many things that I can do

Distraction

Thinking about unpleasant symptoms will tend to make them worse. We begin the 'fear of fear' cycle, provoking further symptoms as well as preventing existing ones from disappearing.



It is difficult to simply turn your attention away from unpleasant feelings. To do so, two things are necessary.

- Be determined to not think about or dwell on the symptoms.
- Fill your mind with other things; distract yourself.



Distraction Techniques

1. *Mental games.* Doing puzzles, crosswords or other word games, reciting a poem, singing a song or counting backwards from one hundred, are all useful distraction exercises. The important thing is that they take your attention away from the panic thoughts.
2. *Environmental focus.* Concentrating on a specific detail of the world around you, for example, making words out of the number plates of cars or guessing what people do for a living. Focussing on the outside world will prevent you thinking about what is going on inside
3. *Using a bridging object.* This might be a photograph or a special brooch or a souvenir from a happy time. Looking at the object generates positive anxiety-reducing thoughts.
4. *Physical activity.* Giving yourself a task to do takes your mind off worrying thoughts, for example, handing out drinks at a party, changing the music, or washing up after a meal. On a more general level, keeping yourself physically active and mentally distracted from worrying thoughts by pursuing sporting activities is one of the best insulators against stress.
5. *Meditation.* Techniques derived from eastern meditation systems can also be very useful. Sometimes a mantra or a special words can be used. The meditator focuses the mind upon the mantra in an effortless, relaxed way and with practice can block out other thoughts and ideas and achieve a level of relaxation.

Progressive muscle relaxation exercise

Sit or lie down in a comfortable position.
Relax yourself to the best of your ability.

Consider the various muscle groups one at a time, and aim to learn the difference between tight and relaxed muscles. Try constantly to concentrate on the feelings in the muscles as it goes from tight to loose.

Hands and arms

Clench your fists, and tense your arms; feel tightness in your hands and arms, then slowly relax them. See how far they will go, but do not push. Do not hold on at all; let everything go.

Shoulders

Hunch your shoulders, then gradually let them settle down. Proceed as above.

Forehead

Pull your eyebrows together, then gradually let your forehead smooth out.

Eyes

Screw your eyes up tight, then gradually let them smooth out, leaving your eyes closed, feeling your eyeballs sink, and your eyelids droop. Let them get really heavy.

Jaw

Bite your back teeth together, then gradually ease off, and let your jaw get heavy.

Back of neck

Pull your chin forward on to your chest, feel tightness, then relax.



Front of neck

Pull your head back, feel tightness, then relax.

Breath

Slow and steady, letting yourself go each time you breathe out.

Tummy

Pull in your tummy tight, then gradually let it go, feeling it relax.

Thighs

Push your heels down hard against the floor, feeling the tightness in your thighs, then gradually let that go.

Calves

Point your toes, then gradually let that tightness go.

Let everything go further and further, and think about a really relaxing scene, for example lying in the grass by a river, under a warm sun and blue sky, or sitting by a fire in a big, comfortable chair. Feel yourself getting heavier and heavier.

Coping with sleeping problems

Useful Information about sleeping

- There is no such thing as an ideal length of sleep. Some people need 10 hours, others need three. Napoleon, Churchill and Margaret Thatcher are all reported as only needing between three and four hours sleep a night.
- As you grow older you require less sleep. A person who had 10 hours at 20 years old may require five or less at 60.
- There is no danger in losing a few nights sleep. People often assume they will become ill, or their performance will be impaired. Both fears are usually groundless.
- Your body will take all the sleep it needs unless forcibly prevented.

Hints for getting to sleep

1. Prepare yourself before going to bed;

- Take exercise early in the day;
- Avoid spicy or heavy food and caffeine in the few hours before you retire;
- Have a milky drink before bed;
- Take time to relax by having a warm bath or listening to restful music, or complete a relaxation exercise.
- Make sure your bedroom is quiet and your bed in comfortable.

2. Go to bed only when you are sleepy; do not try to get more sleep by going to bed early.

3. Use your bed only for sleeping. Do not read, watch TV or eat in bed unless you are sure by your past experience that these activities help you sleep.

4. When you are in bed, relax and do not think about worrying issues. If there is a problem, identify all of your worrying thoughts by writing them down on a piece of paper earlier in the evening, and leave that piece of paper downstairs. When in bed, use relaxation and distraction exercises to help you.

5. If you have not fallen asleep in about 15 to 20 minutes, or if you wake up and cannot get back to sleep, then get out of bed and do something else until you feel sleepy. Don't lie there tossing and turning. Go to a different room and do something which is different and unstimulating like reading or ironing. Return to bed after a break when you feel sleepy.

6. Set your alarm and get up at the same time each morning regardless of how much sleep you received during the night.



