

# ABOUT ANXIETY

## What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a feeling of fear or panic. Feeling generally anxious sometimes is normal. Most people worry about something - like speaking in public or exams - but once the difficult situation is over, you feel better and calm down.

If the problem has gone but the feeling of fear or panic stays or even gets stronger, that's when anxiety becomes a problem.

With as many as one in six young people experiencing anxiety at some point, it is very common to have anxiety.

Celebrity vlogger Zoe Sugg, aka Zoella, revealed that she often suffers from anxiety but has added that with professional help she's learned a lot of techniques that make the condition totally manageable.

## The symptoms of anxiety

The symptoms of anxiety start out the same as just feeling generally anxious but get worse or last longer than they should. These include:

- Feeling frightened, nervous or panicky all the time
- Getting down or depressed
- Difficulty sleeping
- Low appetite
- Lack of concentration
- Tired and irritable
- Palpitations - when your heart feels like its racing
- Dry mouth
- Trembling
- Feeling faint
- Stomach cramps and/or diarrhoea



Feeling one, some or even most of the above doesn't necessarily mean you have anxiety. It's important to talk to your GP to get a full diagnosis.

## What to do about anxiety

Take the first step – if you think you are affected by anxiety, tell someone.

**You might not like asking for help. You may feel that you don't want to burden other people. You worry about what they might think or that they could tell others.**

**You may even be afraid that they'll laugh at you.**

**In fact, people who care about you will want to help you.**

### Who can you ask for help?

- Your family – parents or carers, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles or cousins
- Trusted friends – your own friends, or friends of the family, neighbours
- At school - one of the Mental Health Ambassadors, a Guidance Teacher, the school nurse, or any other trusted adult.

Remember, you can also call Childline - 0800 1111

## Treating anxiety

The starting point is to visit your doctor (GP) with an adult. The doctor will talk to you about how you are feeling and suggest some things that they think will help.

They might suggest:

**1. Talking treatments** (also known as counselling or therapy). This is when you work with a trained therapist to understand the causes of your anxiety, and to find strategies to manage it.

There are lots of different types of talking treatments available, but the most commonly prescribed talking treatment for anxiety is called cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). CBT helps you to understand your thoughts and feelings and to change the way they affect you.

### 2. Self-help (things that you can do to help yourself :)

All of the strategies in the *What Helps With Stress* handout can also help with anxiety.

In addition, there are self-help resources that have been developed by professionals for you to use by yourself. They can be in the form of workbooks, websites and apps.

## Quick Control Skills

To help manage the symptoms of anxiety, try some of the following Quick Control Skills.

### Mantras

Sit alone in a quiet, dark room. Try to clear your mind as much as possible. Think of a word or phrase such as:

- 'I am calm'
- 'relax'
- 'I am in control'

Close your eyes. Slowly repeat the word or phrase in your mind, over and over. Do this for ten minutes each day or when you feel anxious. If unwanted thoughts come into your mind, try to push them away.

### Describe your setting

As soon as you feel your stress rise, describe (aloud if you want to) something you can see in great detail, for example,

'I can see a picture on the wall. It is in a dark wood frame. There is a boat on a loch. There is a mountain at the back of the loch. There are trees at the front of the loch. The sky is clear and it looks like it is sunset.'

If you are outside, you can focus on all the sounds you can hear. You should do this in as much detail as you can, as this will help push stressed thoughts out of your mind.

### 'Worry time'

Put aside 15 minutes each evening. This is your time to worry about the things that have bothered you in the day. Therefore, if you start to worry in the morning, you stop and tell yourself to store it up for your 'worry time' that night. At the start of your 'worry time', think of what you have to worry about and then try to do so. Chances are you may not recall what it was. You may feel it is not worth the worry. Even if you do, you may find it hard to bring on any worry.

### So, what happened?

Carry a note pad with you. Write down the things you worry about and rate the chances of them happening, e.g. 100% means it will happen, 60% means it might happen, and so on. Look through your diary a few days later and see if they did happen. Keep doing this. You might find that you can stop the worry more easily as you stand back and rate the chances.

### Coping with a tension headache

Try this if you feel a tight band round the front and back of your scalp. Change your posture – do not sit all hunched up. Get some support for the small of your back. Find the groove in the back of your neck. Curl up the fingers of both hands. Push them into the groove as hard as you can. Tilt your head back at the same time. Hold this for about one minute. Repeat this as often as you need to.

## One goal a day

Try this if you feel you do not have a good structure to the day or if you do not get around to doing things. Each night, work out a goal for the next day. This should be something you are not doing but would feel better if you were. It might be something like:

- Get up in time to have breakfast before going to school
- Go swimming with a friend after school
- Finish a chapter of your book

In other words, the usual things you would do if you felt on top of things. Try to make your goals precise, such as 'finish a chapter of your book' not 'read for a bit'. This helps you know whether you have achieved what you set out to achieve. If you have finished the chapter then you have achieved your goal and a pat on the back is in order. The aim is for you to go to bed each night and be able to say to yourself that you have taken at least one step forward.

## Breathing retraining

This is a quick way to calm your body. It can also help prevent panic.

- Sit in a comfy chair and relax as much as you can.
- Take a slow normal breath (not a deep breath) and think 'one' to yourself.
- As you breathe out, think 'relax'.
- Breathe in again and think 'two'.
- Breathe out and think 'relax'.
- Keep doing this up to ten
- When you reach ten, reverse and start back down to one.
- Try to put all else out of your mind. Try to see the numbers and the word 'relax' in your mind's eye.

Do not be put off if you cannot do this straight away. You can boost the benefits of this by using Quick Control Skill 8.

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## Want to Know More?

Childline

<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/your-feelings/anxiety-stress-panic/>

EPIC friends

[www.epicfriends.co.uk/anxiety](http://www.epicfriends.co.uk/anxiety)

<http://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/anxiety.asp>

Young Minds

[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

[www.cool2talk.org](http://www.cool2talk.org)

Sources: *Young Minds*  
*Quick Control Skills, STEPS team, Glasgow*