



Work book

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(Images borrowed from Google image)

The What, How, Why, When and Who of anxiety?



What is anxiety?

Anxiety is another word to describe 'worry or stress'. People who worry a lot are said to be 'anxious or nervous'. It describes the uncomfortable feeling you get when you are thinking or facing a difficult time or problem.

You might like to use another word for anxiety, like worry bug or Mr A or some things else that feels right.

How does anxiety feel?

Anxiety is not a bad thing; it is just your body's way of letting you know you're bothered by something or even frightened. It may feel uncomfortable and it is often linked to feeling sick, shaky or sweaty. You might also experience feelings like you have butterflies in your tummy, wobbly legs, racing heart, breathlessness or tight muscles.

Why do I feel anxious?

A simple answer to this question is that something that was not a difficulty to you before is now something fearful. It may be a thought that has become a big worry; for example, 'What if my mum forgets to pick me up from school?' or an experience that makes the world seem scary, e.g. 'I was sick in school one morning and now I worry I will be sick anywhere'

When is anxiety okay?

Everyone feels anxious from time to time, especially if it is something new like riding a horse for the first time or taking a big exam. Most young people feel a little worried if they go and see their doctor or dentist. Some people may feel anxious if they are away from home, like when they stay over at a friend's house. This is very normal and some anxiety is okay.

When is anxiety not okay?

Some worries don't make sense, like worrying that there is a monster under the bed or being afraid of fluffy bunnies. Other worries are accidentally learnt, like being afraid of baked beans because you may have been sick once after eating them. When these types of worries affect you everyday or stop you from doing things you want to do, it becomes abnormal.

Who can help me with my anxiety?

Anyone you can trust and can talk to can help you with your anxiety. They can help you problem solve, find ways to make your anxiety seem much smaller and help you relax.

The science behind anxiety

Imagine if you could go back in time to a place when cave men and cave women lived on the earth. Their basic needs would be keeping warm, finding food or water, companionship and avoiding being attacked by wild creatures!



Back in the 'cave days', the world was a dangerous place with hungry wild animals, giant creatures, extreme weather conditions, poisonous plants and dangerous environments. Back then, there was no Google to check to dangerous routes, no cars to speed away from wild animals and no weather stations to warn of storms coming.

Now imagine you were a cave person out gathering food (because they had no supermarkets back then) for the rest of the family.



As you are walking around, a large grumpy bear jumps out, growling. You really have three choices; stay really still, run away and hide or defend yourself. With either choice, you would need to act quickly and accurately which needs energy. This reaction is something which has stayed the same since the cave days.

When our body recognises a threat and we need to act quickly we have a natural 'kick



start' chemical called **Adrenalin**, which makes our heart, beat faster. The heart's job is to pump lots of blood around our body, to our legs and arms, so we can run or react really quickly. Sometime this makes our legs feel wobbly or our arms feel shaky. The pumped blood raises our temperature and can make us feel sweaty.

The last thing a cave person wants is to be out of breath if they are trying to run away when being chased by a bear! To be able to run we need **Oxygen** to be able to breathe properly, so our breathing becomes faster. Sometimes breathing like this can make us feel

dizzy or slightly sick, but it quickly passes and returns to normal.



This reaction is often called the 'fight or flight' reaction because a cave person would either fight (defend themselves) or flight (run away) in the face of danger.

FIGHT



FLIGHT



This reaction has continued to stay with us humans as a basic way to look after ourselves. However, sometimes we over estimate a danger and we over react. Imagine taking a cave person to a 3D film about bears. They would probably run away from the film! We might find this silly, but it would be a very anxious experience for a cave person.



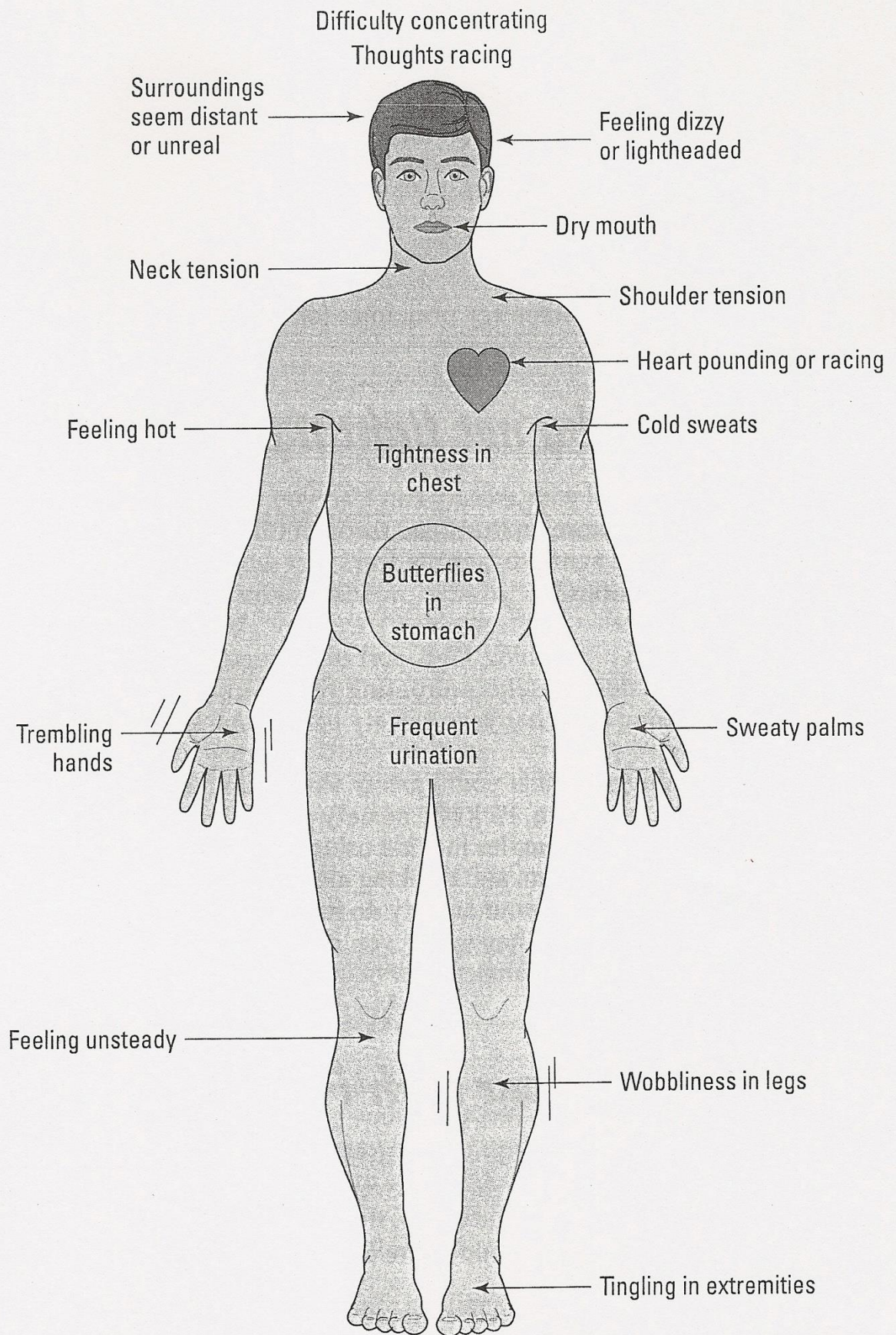


Figure 9-1:
Common
physical
sensations
of anxiety.

Understanding your anxiety

Hopefully you have a better understanding of anxiety and that it is normal and can be useful sometimes.

The next step is to understand your anxiety.

How would you describe your anxiety? Look over the page and point out how your body feels when it is anxious. Remember, everybody is different.

Write down what makes you anxious or worried:



Now answer yes or no to the questions below about your anxiety/worry:

This is a real threat to me?

This will hurt me?

This can hurt others?

This is something that no one else has experienced?

This is always with me all the time?

I think about this all day?

Scoring: any yes answers score a 1 and no answers score 0

Your score = _____



If you scored more than 3, then it is likely your body is over reacting to anxiety and it is time to take action.

If you scored less than three, then well done! You are now a step-closer to overcoming your anxiety.

The next step is to help our body not to over-react to something which makes us anxious. To do this we learn how to better relax. This doesn't just mean lying in front of the TV, eating sweets! You need to practice relaxation regularly, so your body can do it even when you are in a tricky situation like an exam.

Beck Anxiety Inventory

Below is a list of common symptoms of anxiety. Please carefully read each item in the list. Indicate how much you have been bothered by that symptom during the past month, including today, by circling the number in the corresponding space in the column next to each symptom.

	Not At All	Mildly but it didn't bother me much.	Moderately - it wasn't pleasant at times	Severely -- it bothered me a lot
Numbness or tingling	0	1	2	3
Feeling hot	0	1	2	3
Wobbliness in legs	0	1	2	3
Unable to relax	0	1	2	3
Fear of worst happening	0	1	2	3
Dizzy or lightheaded	0	1	2	3
Heart pounding/racing	0	1	2	3
Unsteady	0	1	2	3
Terrified or afraid	0	1	2	3
Nervous	0	1	2	3
Feeling of choking	0	1	2	3
Hands trembling	0	1	2	3
Shaky / unsteady	0	1	2	3
Fear of losing control	0	1	2	3
Difficulty in breathing	0	1	2	3
Fear of dying	0	1	2	3
Scared	0	1	2	3
Indigestion	0	1	2	3
Faint / lightheaded	0	1	2	3
Face flushed	0	1	2	3
Hot/cold sweats	0	1	2	3
Column Sum				

Scoring - Sum each column. Then sum the column totals to achieve a grand score. Write that score here _____.

Interpretation

A grand sum between **0 – 21** indicates very low anxiety. That is usually a good thing. However, it is possible that you might be unrealistic in either your assessment which would be denial or that you have learned to “mask” the symptoms commonly associated with anxiety. Too little “anxiety” could indicate that you are detached from yourself, others, or your environment.

A grand sum between **22 – 35** indicates moderate anxiety. Your body is trying to tell you something. Look for patterns as to when and why you experience the symptoms described above. For example, if it occurs prior to public speaking and your job requires a lot of presentations you may want to find ways to calm yourself before speaking or let others do some of the presentations. You may have some conflict issues that need to be resolved. Clearly, it is not “panic” time but you want to find ways to manage the stress you feel.

A grand sum that **exceeds 36** is a potential cause for concern. Again, look for patterns or times when you tend to feel the symptoms you have circled. Persistent and high anxiety is not a sign of personal weakness or failure. It is, however, something that needs to be proactively treated or there could be significant impacts to you mentally and physically. You may want to consult a counselor if the feelings persist.

Imagine your anxiety was a character

Think about what it would be called. What would it look like? What would its strengths be? What would be its weaknesses?

Here is an example:



Strengths:

- I grow bigger the more you worry
- I have the power to make your mind go blank in a test
- I can send a worry thought to you as many times I like

Weaknesses:

- My powers become weaker when you laugh and have fun
- Relaxation shields me away
- I get smaller the less you think about me
- I disappear each day you share your worry thoughts with someone

Maybe you would like to draw your own character to help you understand your anxiety, its strengths and weaknesses.



Top tips for anti-tension techniques

Problem area: Head

When we are anxious or worried we often frown, so tension builds up in the area of our forehead and eyes. You may experience headaches or eye ache.

Tip: Stretch out this area when it feels tense by raising and lowering your eye brows about 3 times. You may also find rubbing your temples (the side of your head by your eyes) 3 times in a circular motion once forward and then backwards.

Problem area: Jaw

We often clench our teeth when we are worried which creates tension in the jaw.

Tip: When you notice yourself doing this, slacken your jaw slightly and massage your jaw just below your ear. You can also take a breath and blow it out your mouth like a big sigh.

Problem area: Neck

The back of your neck can get very tense and painful.

Tip: Stretch this area out 2-3 times a day. Raise and lower your head up and then face down slowly 3 times. Then look left, centre, then right 3 times/ (Without causing yourself any discomfort).

And/Or massage your neck and shoulders (or get someone else to do it)

Problem area: Shoulders

Anxiety can feel like a great weight on your shoulders and literally cause us tension in this area.

Tip: Sit on a chair, with your back relaxed but straight. Hold your arms loosely by your sides and bring your shoulders up to your ears by shrugging them for the count of 3. Then slowly allow them to drop back down. Repeat about 3-5 times.

Problem area: Hands and upper arms

We may fiddle or clench our hand when we are anxious which can cause pain or tension in our hands or upper arms.

Tip: Hold your arms loosely by your sides, palms facing towards your legs. Stretch your fingers out and slowly turn you hands to face backwards and then turn then out towards your sides. Hold for 3 seconds and turn back again. This will stretch out all the tension. Repeat 3 times.

Quick relaxation

When we have been worried or anxious for a long time, it may seem like we forget how to relax. We may even envy those who can relax as it may seem like an impossible task. This can be changed and help is at hand below.



Write down activities you like to do to relax and tick yes if they work

Activity 1) _____ yes/ no

Activity 2) _____ yes/ no

Activity 3) _____ yes/ no

Activity 4) _____ yes/ no

If there are any that you have ticked 'no' let's talk about why they may no longer work and what might help.

Write down what you are going to try

instead _____

Remember: Daily relaxation is the key to fighting anxiety, but it takes practice!





Relaxation: The 'Melting chocolate' method

This method can be carried out when you are in bed and ready to go to sleep or in a comfy chair if you prefer. It may help to have someone read the method out to you while you relax and listen.

Imagine you have a coating made of hard chocolate and you need to make it melt so you can relax into a comfy position. To do this you must tense and relax all the muscles in your body to help melt the chocolate away.

Let's start with the top of your body and work down to your feet. First close your eyes and get comfy. When you're ready, raise your eyebrows 3 times as high as you can. 1...2...3...Feel the chocolate soften across your forehead and a little behind your head. Now concentrate on your face. Screw up your face as tight as you can 3 times so the brittle coating breaks away. 1...2...3...Feel the chocolate flake off, taking any tension away with it. Now concentrate on your mouth and pull the biggest smile you can 3 times 1...2...3...and then relax. Imagine the chocolate melts away from your forehead, cheeks and chin. Feel your head relax and sink into your pillow.

Moving down to your shoulders, pull them towards your ears and hold for the count of 3. 1....3. When you relax, feel the warm soft chocolate melt away off your shoulders and onto the bed beneath. It feels warm and cosy.

Moving down your arms, press your whole arm into the bed and stretch out your hand and fingers for 3 stretches. 1..2..3. When you relax, feel the gooey chocolate on your arms sink into the bed taking any tension away with it.

Moving onto your legs, you can already feel the chocolate is soft and melting, so press your legs into the bed by straightening them for the count of 3. Imagine your legs feeling warmer as they melt all the chocolate away right down to your ankles.

Finally, concentrate on the last bit of chocolate on your feet by stretching your toes 3 times. Feel the chocolate running warm between your toes towards your ankles and under your body. Feel all the weight of your body sink lower into the bed as you let go, feeling cosy, comfortable, relaxed and drift off into a wonderful sleep.

Quick and easy relaxation

- 1) Take four deep, slow breath- Breathing in through the nose for the count of 4, then blow the air slowly out your mouth saying 'relax'
- 2) Tense your feet and hands by scrunching them up for the count of 4 and you slowly breathe in again through the nose and slowly stretch out your hands and feet as you breathe out your mouth.
- 3) Now tense your, hands and shoulders as you breathe in for the count of 4 and slowly breathe out through the mouth as you release your hands and shoulders.
- 4) Repeat step 1 again and feel the tension loosen.



Super quick tension release

- 1) Clasp your hands together. As you breathe in through your nose, grip by squeezing your hands together tightly for the count of 4, then slowly release. Stretch your hands out and shake all the tension away.



Certificate of Achievement

To: _____

DOB: _____

For: Working really hard to learn new
skills to keep calm in the face of
anxiety.

Awarded by: _____

Date awarded: _____