



## WHAT IS ANXIETY?

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Anxiety is an uncomfortable feeling of not being at ease, fear or worry and is the body's natural response to danger. Anxiety happens when we perceive a threat (either real or imagined), feel under pressure or are facing a difficult situation.

## IT'S COMMON TO FEEL ANXIOUS SOMETIMES

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Sometimes small amounts of anxiety can be good for us. It helps motivate you to perform, or to stay focused and alert especially when taking exams or when there is danger. Anxiety is not good for us when it becomes overwhelming and starts to impact our life negatively. For example, when you are constantly worried or feeling on edge and you start to avoid situations or activities that you would have previously enjoyed.

## SIGNS OF ANXIETY

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Physical	Behaviour/mood	Thoughts
Pounding heart	Avoiding situations or activities	Racing thoughts
Shortness of breath	Sleeping too much/little	Constant worrying
Stomach upsets	Eating too much/little	Trouble concentrating
Tightness of chest	Crying	
Dizziness	Irritable/angry	
Feeling sick	Restless/ nervous	

## MANAGING ANXIETY

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### Relaxation Techniques

- **Calm breathing:** If you can, find somewhere comfortable to sit or lie down, put one hand on your tummy and one hand on your chest. Take a slow breath in through your nose to the count of 5. Feel your tummy expand as you slowly breathe in and then deflate as you slowly exhale to the count of 5. Repeat this 5 times.
- **Focus on the here and now:** When we get anxious our mind and thoughts tend to race uncontrollably either in the past or in the future. Try to focus on the present by becoming aware of

your breathing, how your body is feeling and focus on something around you. If you thinking anxious thoughts whilst doing this acknowledge and accept them then bring your focus back to the present.

- **Visualize yourself in a calm, safe place:** Take some deep calming breaths and then visualize yourself in a place that makes you feel safe and calm. This could be a sunny beach, mountains, home. Focus on the sights, smells and noises associated with your safe, calm place.

### **Challenge your thoughts**

- **Positive Mantras:** What you think can have an effect on how you feel and can increase anxiety or help to calm you down. When you start to feel worried or anxious tell yourself “I’m ok I can do this” or “everything will be ok, I’ve done this before and it turned out fine” or “this is my anxiety talking, I don’t have to take notice of it”.
- **Challenge the thoughts:** Be mindful of your thoughts, often when we have anxiety the thoughts can be about things that haven’t happened yet “what ifs” and tend to be worse case scenario. This can lead to needing reassurance from others and not trusting yourself to cope or handle situations effectively. When you catch these thoughts ask yourself the chances of it actually happening and if it did “how might I handle it”.
- **Allow yourself to worry:** Allow yourself 15 minutes every day to worry and then visualize putting the worries away in a container with a lid until the same time the next day. If you start to think about the worries outside of the allocated time write them down for the allotted worry time the next day.
- **Distract yourself:** Do activities that you enjoy to take your mind off anxiety and worry (bubble bath, listen to music, watch a movie etc.)

### **Keep yourself healthy**

- Keep active, it is scientifically proven to improve your mood!
- Get enough sleep, sleep improves mood and is essential for wellbeing.
- Eat well, your mind and body needs good fuel to perform well.
- Avoid alcohol and other stimulants, they can make the symptoms of anxiety worse.
- Don’t isolate yourself, spending time with friends and family can help you control the symptoms of anxiety.

**Remember! If trying to help yourself is not working and anxiety is having an overwhelming impact on your life talk to someone you trust – friend, family, instructor, chaplain or call MHC Counselling services on 403 529 3819.**