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bgstudent advice 

Managing Anxiety



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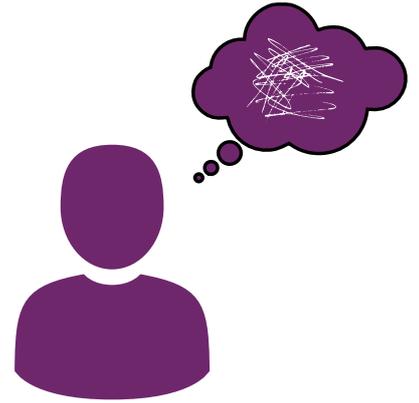
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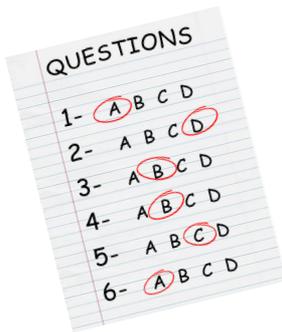
What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is a natural human response to threat and is what we feel when we are experiencing worry, tension, or fear. We generally experience anxiety in relation to things that are about to happen, or things that we think may occur in the future.



It is completely normal to experience anxiety at some point in your life, particularly when dealing with stressful events or changes.

For example, you may feel anxious...



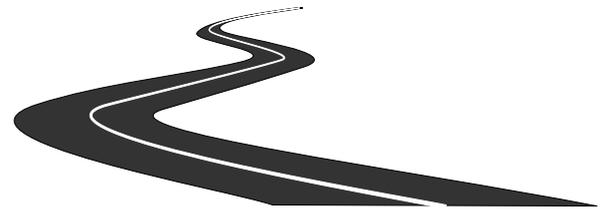
Before sitting an exam.



When starting a new placement.



When going into an interview.

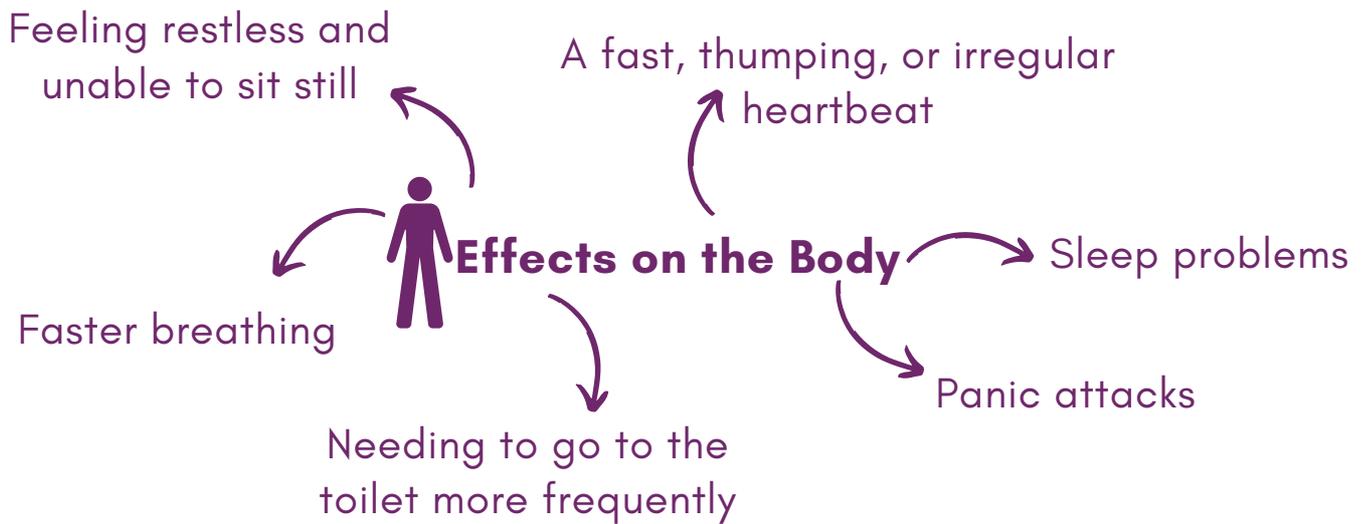


When planning life beyond University.



Signs & Symptoms

Anxiety feels different for everyone, so what you may experience could differ from what another person experiences. Below we have listed a some of the signs and symptoms that you could experience (it is important to note that this list is not exhaustive).



When is it a problem?

Although it is completely normal to experience anxiety at various points in our life, it is also important to acknowledge when you may need to access support.

Anxiety may become a mental health problem if you are struggling to control your worries and it begins to affect your daily living.

Here are a few signs that may indicate that anxiety is becoming a problem for you:

You avoid situations that may cause you to feel anxious.

Your fears and worries are out of proportion to the situation.

Your feelings of anxiety are very strong or long lasting.

Your feelings are very distressing and/or out of control.

You regularly experience symptoms of anxiety (this may include panic attacks).

You are struggling to go about or enjoy your day-to-day life.



Accessing Support

Speak to the university's Mental Health Adviser



Whether you just need a one-off chat, or you require ongoing support, our Mental Health Adviser is here to listen, offer confidential advice, and help to coordinate the necessary support for you- this may include referral to external services. Our Mental Health Adviser can be contacted via Student Advice:



studentadvice@bishopg.ac.uk



01522 583 600

Speak to your doctor

Arrange an appointment with your GP to discuss your symptoms and the impact these are having on your day-to-day life. Your GP will then be able to explore possible support options with you.



'Doc Ready' will help you to prepare for your GP appointment; Scan the QR Code above ^

Talking Therapies

Talking/ Psychological therapy (e.g. CBT) is a commonly used and often effective treatment for Anxiety.



You can complete a self-referral to Lincolnshire's free NHS service **Steps2Change** by **scanning the QR code ^**

Or you can ask **Student Advice** for more information about the **counselling service available through the university.**



There are actually several different types of Anxiety Disorders. Over the remaining pages of this booklet, we will explore some of these disorders and possible strategies that can be used to help manage them.

For a more extensive list of Anxiety Disorders, visit the 'Rethink Mental Illness' website.

Scan the QR Code >



Generalised Anxiety Disorder

Generalised Anxiety Disorder, often abbreviated to 'GAD', is a common anxiety disorder but can often be quite tricky to formally diagnose. This is because GAD does not have some of the unique symptoms that other Anxiety Disorders have.

GAD is a long-term mental health condition that causes you to worry about a wide range of different things. Unlike some other Anxiety Disorders, if you have GAD, you are not likely to be triggered by just one specific event/ activity/ circumstance. People with GAD often feel anxious most days and often can't remember the last time they felt completely relaxed. Once they have resolved one anxious thought, another one about something different is likely to occur.

If you have GAD, it is not uncommon to also suffer from other conditions such as Depression or another Anxiety Disorder.

Generalised Anxiety Disorder can be caused by many different things. Some of these are listed below:

A painful, long-term health condition.

A history of stressful or traumatic experiences.

Genetics.

Overactivity in areas of the brain involved in emotions and behaviour.

Chemical imbalance in the brain.



Managing GAD

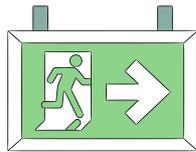
There are a few simple self-help strategies that can help to reduce the symptoms of Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD).

Some of these strategies are listed below:

Distraction

Something that takes your attention away from a triggering event is known as a distraction. Distractions can include:

- Talking to a friend.
- Going for a walk.
- Listening to music.



A distraction does not make the problem disappear, but it provides a temporary 'escape'. This helps to ease distressing emotions which makes it easier for you to go back to the problem and address it in a more rational way.

Validate your feelings



Emotions can intensify when we try to fight them, and when we beat ourselves up for feeling a certain way, we can make ourselves feel worse.

Don't think about an octopus sitting in your lecture.

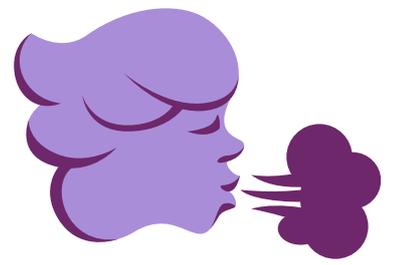
You're thinking about it right? Fighting thoughts and feelings exaggerates them.

If you validate your feelings as a rational response to a situation, you will start to feel the intensity of your emotions decrease.



Breathing exercises

Practicing breathing exercises helps to reduce the unpleasant physical sensations experienced when feeling anxious.

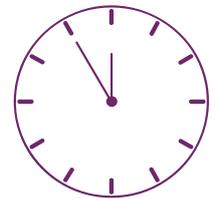


One commonly used exercise is Box Breathing. Breathing in for 4, holding for 4, breathing out for 4 and resting for 4.

Worry Time

It is completely normal for worries or concerns to crop up throughout the day, but trying to 'push' these thoughts away time and time again can be exhausting and can also increase levels of distress.

Having a dedicated 'worry time' to fully focus on our concerns can help us to take back control of our worrying thoughts.



Set aside 10-15 minutes a day to address your worries. If worries crop up outside of this time, simply make a note of them to take into 'worry time' with you.

Lifestyle Changes

Making changes to your lifestyle and routine can lead to improvements with your mental health.



Studies have shown that for some people, exercise can be as effective as medication in reducing symptoms of anxiety. Even including a walk into your daily routine could help to improve your mood.

Reducing your caffeine and alcohol intake can also help as these substances can induce symptoms of anxiety.

Although some people use smoking or drug use as a short-term stress-relief, in the long-term, stopping these behaviours will reduce anxiety.



Panic Disorder

Panic Disorder is an anxiety disorder where you regularly experience sudden attacks of panic or fear. People suffering from panic disorder regularly experience feelings of anxiety for no apparent reason.

Anxiety is a feeling of unease which can range from moderate to severe and can include feelings of worry, fear and panic. Panic is the most severe form of anxiety.

Panic attacks can be extremely uncomfortable and frightening, so you may find yourself trying to avoid certain situations that you think trigger your attacks. Avoidant behaviour like this can create a cycle of fear, adding to your existing anxiety and possibly causing you to have more panic attacks.

Panic attacks can come on very quickly, and when they do, you will experience a rush of intense physical and mental symptoms. Some of these may include:

Shortness of breath.

Sweating.

Shaky Limbs.

Nausea.

Chest Pains.

A choking sensation.

Ringing in your ears.

Dizziness.

Racing heartbeat.



Managing Panic Attacks

During a Panic Attack -

Focus on your breathing - take deep, long breathes in through the nose and out through the mouth.



Stamp on the spot- some people find that this helps to take back control of breathing.



Focus on your senses/ practice grounding- try to focus on the present moment. A good way to do this is by using the 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding technique.

After a Panic Attack -

Focus on self-care -

Self-care is always important, but be sure to place particular focus on practising this after experiencing a panic attack. What does your body need? Do you need to take yourself to a quiet place for a rest? Do you need something to eat or drink?



Speak to someone you trust -

If you feel able to, speak to someone about your panic attacks. This could be a friend, family member, GP or other mental health professional. Speaking to someone could help you access the necessary support.



Remember-

Although panic attacks are distressing, they are not dangerous.

An attack is not likely to cause you any physical harm and you are unlikely to be hospitalised as a result.



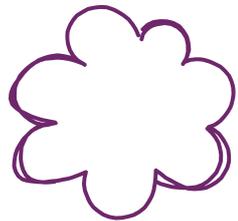
Social Anxiety

In certain social situations, like when meeting new people or when performing in front of others, most of us feel shy or anxious. However, for some people, this feeling can be much more severe and can impact their daily lives.

What can happen when you are socially anxious?

Thoughts you may have...

"I'm making a fool of myself, everyone's staring at me"



"I have nothing interesting to say, people will think I'm boring"

"People are laughing and talking about me"

"Everyone else is very confident"

Ways you may feel...

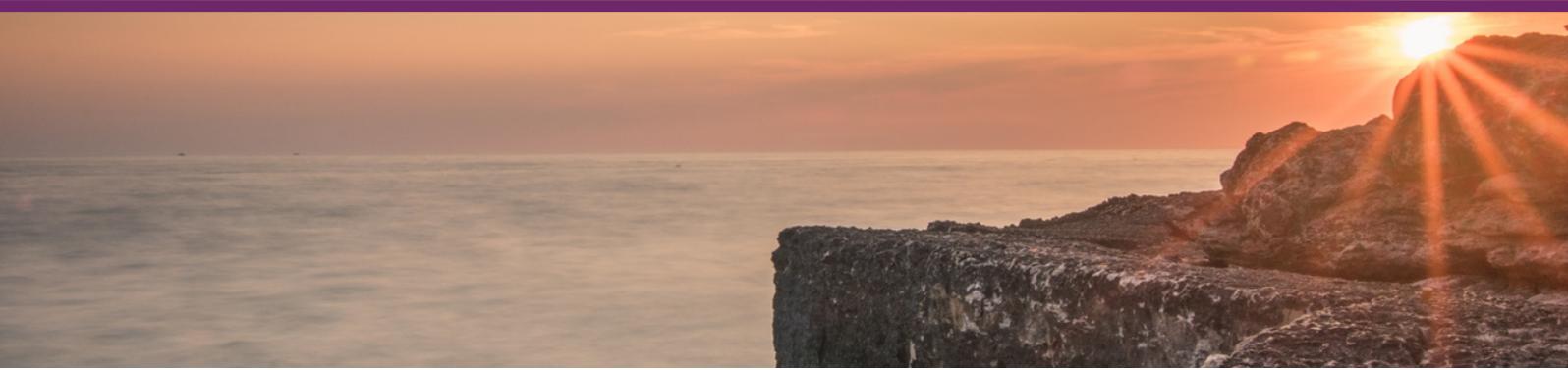
Anxious

Embarrassed



Self-conscious

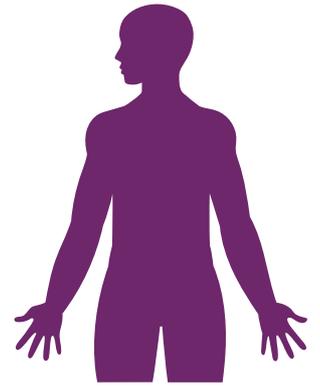
Vulnerable



Physical sensations you may experience...

Blushing

Sweating



A churning stomach

Fast heartbeat

A churning stomach

Struggling to speak clearly- stammering/ stuttering

Things you might do...

Avoid social situations wherever possible.



Always have someone with you when going into a social situation.

Try to leave social situations as quickly as possible.

Use alcohol or drugs to feel more confident in social situations.



Managing Social Anxiety

There are a few simple self-help strategies that can help reduce social anxiety.

Some of these strategies are listed below:

Understand more about your anxiety-

Think about or write down things you experience in certain social situations. Take note of thoughts and feelings you experience, as well as the way you behave in these situations. It may help if you keep a diary.



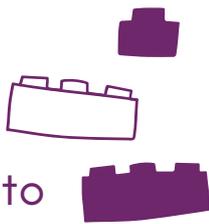
Coping in the moment-

Practicing relaxation and 'coping in the moment' techniques can help you to manage your anxiety. These techniques can include things like simple breathing exercises. Read our 'coping in the moment' document for more information.



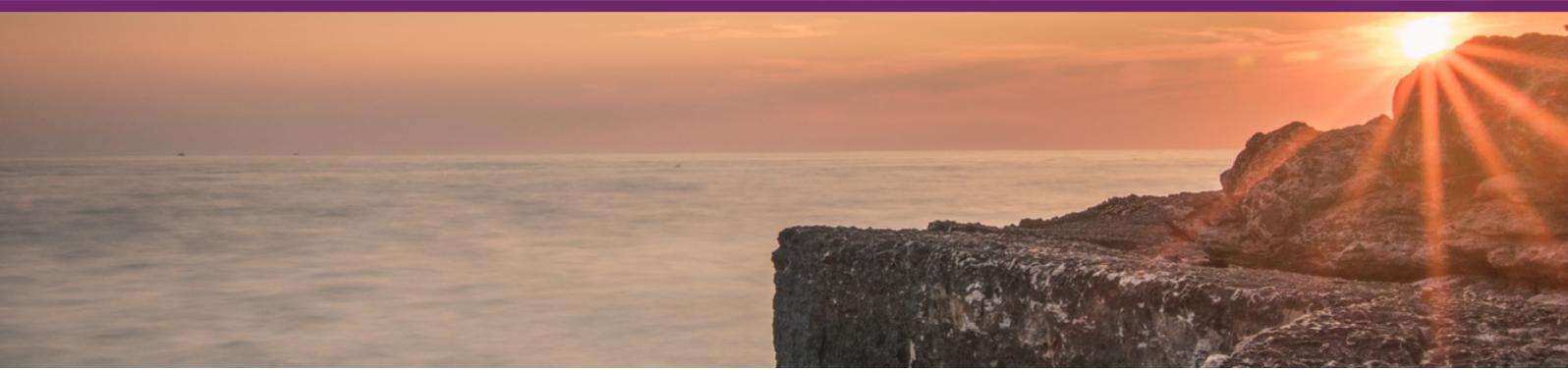
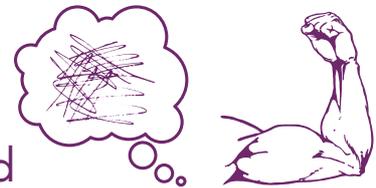
Break it down -

Break down challenging situations into smaller parts and work on feeling more relaxed with each part.



Challenge your thoughts-

Try to focus on what people are saying rather than just assuming the worst. Try to identify your specific unhelpful thinking styles and challenge these.



Health Anxiety

Health Anxiety (sometimes referred to as Hypochondria) has become even more prevalent since the start of the coronavirus pandemic. This form of anxiety is based around worries about being ill or becoming ill. People with Health Anxiety spend so much time worrying about illness, that it starts to take over their lives.



Health Anxiety Indicators -

You may have health anxiety if you...



Constantly worry about your health.



Frequently ask people for reassurance that you're not ill.



Frequently check your body for signs of illness.



Obsessively look at health information on the internet or in the media.



Worry that a doctor or medical tests have missed signs of illness.



Act as if you are ill (e.g. avoid physical activities).

Remember-

Anxiety itself can cause symptoms such as headaches or chest pains, and these can be easily mistaken for signs of illness.



Managing Health Anxiety

If you are struggling with Health Anxiety, there are a few simple self-help techniques that you can use to help manage your worries.

A few of these are listed below-

Keep a diary -

Note down how often you engage in behaviours associated with health anxiety. For example, how often you check your body, ask people for reassurance, or look at online health information.



Try to gradually reduce how often you engage in these behaviours.

Challenge your thoughts -

In column 2 write down more balanced thoughts e.g “Headaches can often be a sign of stress”.

Draw a table with two columns.

In column 1 write down your health worries e.g “I’m worried because I keep getting headaches”.



Distract yourself-

When you get the urge to engage in behaviours associated with health anxiety, such as to check your body or look at health information online, distract yourself with some other activity. Try going for a walk or speaking to one of your friends.



Useful Resources

Togetherall

Togetherall is a online mental health support service, offering 24/7 support with trained clinicians online at all times. Users can access anonymous peer and community support, helpful tools, and online courses.



Some of the online courses cover topics including 'managing health anxiety', 'managing social anxiety' and 'managing stress and worry'.

Scan the QR Code to access Togetherall ^

Anxiety UK

Anxiety UK is a national charity being run by, and for people with Anxiety. The organisation offers information and advice, support groups and lots of other resources.

Helpline: **03444 775 774**

Text Service: **07537 416 904**



Anxiety UK

Scan the QR code to access the Anxiety UK website ^

SAM App

SAM (self-help app for the mind) is wellbeing app designed to help you monitor and manage your mental health, with self-help techniques to help with anxiety, depression, loneliness and coping.



Scan the QR code for more information about SAM ^



Feelmo

A free mental health app geared towards university students struggling with anxiety, stress and depression. Feelmo provides you with evidence-based psycho-education to help you better understand what you're feeling, why and what you can do about it.



feelmo

Scan the QR code for more information about Feelmo ^

The Mix

The Mix is a UK based charity that provides free, confidential support for young people under 25 via online, social and mobile. They have a great article on their website, offering advice on how to effectively manage panic attacks.



Scan the QR code to access the article on The Mix website ^

Lincoln Night Light Cafes

The Night Light Café exists to provide a listening ear and some evening company for people who are finding life difficult.

Cafe's are hosted at various locations across Lincoln each night.

To book in, call: **0300 011 1200**



Or message on Facebook or Instagram: **@nightlightcafelincoln**





Speak to Student Advice

 01522 583 600

 studentadvice@bishopg.ac.uk

Scan the QR code to book an
appointment >

