

Anxiety tip sheet

What is anxiety?

Everyone feels anxious from time to time. Stress and worry are common under pressure, and these feelings often ease once the situation passes. For some people, anxious feelings stay around, happen without a clear reason, or make daily life harder to manage. Anxiety is one of the most common mental health experiences in Australia, and support is available.

Common signs

Anxiety can look different for everyone. Some people notice:

- Feeling very worried or anxious most of the time
- Finding it hard to calm down
- Worries or anxious thoughts that feel hard to control
- Feeling tired easily
- Trouble concentrating, or your mind going blank
- Muscle tension
- Trouble sleeping

Things that may help

Different strategies suit different people. You might like to explore a few of these and notice what feels helpful.

Slow breathing

Anxiety can make breathing fast and shallow. Some people find it helps to breathe in slowly for a count of three, then out slowly for a count of three, for a few minutes.

Relaxing the muscles

Some people find a quiet place and, working from the toes up to the head, gently tense each group of muscles for about three seconds, then let go. This may help ease tension.

Coming back to the present

Anxiety can pull thoughts towards a future that has not happened. Gently noticing what you can see, hear and feel right now may help. Some people find regular meditation useful.

Small brave steps

Avoiding what feels frightening can bring short term relief, but may make anxiety stronger over time. Some people find it helps to approach a feared situation in small, manageable steps.

Looking at thoughts

Anxiety can make situations seem more threatening and coping feel harder. Some people find it helpful to ask: what are the facts? Is there another way to look at this?

Worry time

Some people set aside about 10 minutes a day to think about or write down worries. This may help worries take up less of the rest of the day.

Things that **may help** (continued)

Looking after the basics

Keeping active, eating well, spending time outdoors, connecting with family and friends, and doing things you enjoy can all support wellbeing.

Getting to know your anxiety

A simple diary of calmer and more anxious times, and what seems to help, can be useful to share with a GP or psychologist.

When to get **more support**

If things are becoming unmanageable and affecting your social, family, work or study life, you may want to see your GP or a psychologist. You do not need to wait until things feel serious to reach out.

A GP can talk with you about what is happening, your physical health and possible options, which may include a referral to a psychologist. Psychological therapy such as cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) is one evidence based approach for anxiety, and online programs are also available.

Benefits of **seeking support**

- Talking with a GP or psychologist may help you make sense of what is happening.
- Support might help you feel less alone with what you are going through.
- A psychologist could offer new ways of coping that suit you.
- Support could help you find ways to approach worries that feel more manageable.

Need help **right now?**

If you or someone else is in danger or thinking about suicide, please reach out now.

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Emergency services, if life is in danger

13 11 14

Lifeline crisis support, 24 hours, 7 days

13 92 76

13YARN, run by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, 24/7

Trusted **Australian resources**

Beyond Blue beyondblue.org.au

THIS WAY UP online programs (St Vincent's Hospital and UNSW) thiswayup.org.au

This tip sheet offers general information only and does not replace advice from your GP, psychologist or other health professional.