

# Reducing Anxiety: Tips

We've listed some tips for you to explore which can help to reduce feelings of anxiety. We recommend that you take a look in your spare time when you can move at your own pace. Hopefully one or two will stick, so you can use them (or recommend them to a loved one) in a time of need. But some are preventative, so you can start with them straight away!

## Stop the cycle

The more negative you are about something, the more negative you will feel, and you are more likely to act in a way that maintains that negative feeling. To stop the cycle, interrupt your thoughts with a single word - and speak it out loud. Make the word something positive, or something that makes you laugh.

## Stay connected

Identify the important people in your life and reach out to them in times of need. If you can talk about how you're feeling, it will offer you relief. But if you're not ready to get specific, talk with them anyway and choose a neutral subject.



## Schedule worry time

At the beginning of each week, schedule worry time for thoughts that demand your attention - this can help you regain some control. It's like saying to a friend "I'm busy right now, but I'll bet back to you later." 20 minutes a day often does the trick. You can write your worries down as they pop into your head throughout the day, then put them to one side for you to revisit at the scheduled time.

## Focus on your senses

If you're lost in troubled thoughts, focus on one of your senses. If you're cooking, focus on the smell of the food. If you're out for a walk, listen to the birds, or the cars driving by. If you're in the shower, focus on the water touching your skin.

## Watch/listen to something funny

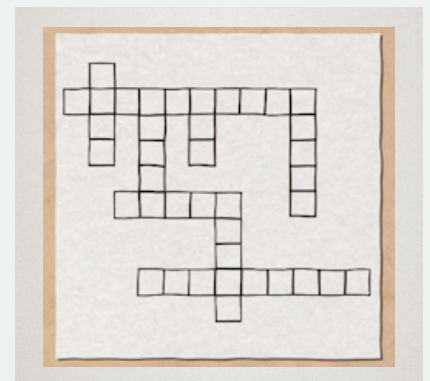
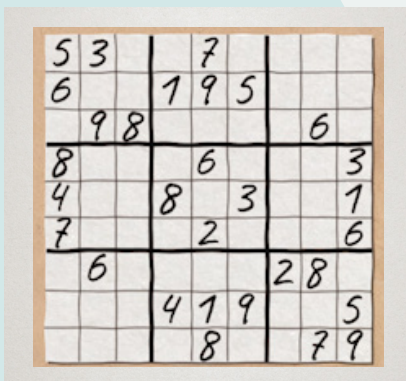
It's an old phrase - laughter is the best medicine - and research shows that laughter has lots of benefits for our mental health. One study found that humour could help lower anxiety as much as (or even more than) exercise can!

## Help others

It's said that those who help others through activities, such as volunteering or community work, are more resilient. If you're not able to volunteer, you could try and do someone a favour every day - it can be something small such as helping someone cross the road, giving a friend a call, or going on a coffee run for your colleagues.

## Give your brain something to do

Sometimes, your brain just needs something to do. It can be useful to pick up a sudoku, a crossword, a puzzle, or to do some mindful colouring.



## Create a safe space

This can be a room or an area in your home, your car, an outside location... anywhere that relaxes you when you're stressed. Perhaps you have a favourite armchair, a seat by a window, or a forest you like to walk in.

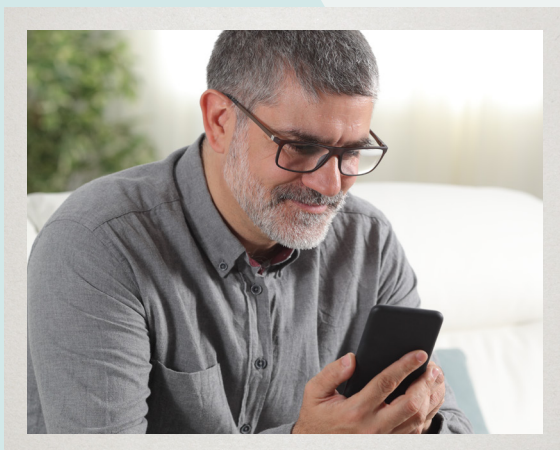


## Control the controllables

Sometimes it's as simple as asking yourself "can I control this situation?" If the answer is yes, break it down into manageable pieces, and take one step forward. If the answer is "no", practise letting it go. We can't control everything, but we can control how we respond.

## Have a Solutions Box

This can be an old shoe box, a list on your phone, or a post-it on your computer - the principle is the same. Put your anxiety-solutions in one place. Whenever you feel out of your depth, you know there's only one place you need to go to. This box will contain the things you need to stop your negative thoughts in their tracks, and give you some relaxation, comfort, and perspective when you need it.



## *Use positive self-talk*

Anxiety can make you feel or think in negative ways. This may be about a particular situation but it can also make you think negatively about yourself too. Try and make a conscious effort to debunk these thoughts. You can start by using simple word swaps to lessen the negativity. For example, swap “failure” for “learning curve”.

## *Quick tips for managing panic attacks*

A panic attack is a fear-based response. It’s an exaggeration of your body's normal response to danger, stress or excitement and the symptoms can make you feel like you are in real physical danger. When you are experiencing one you can:

- Focus on your breathing  
(breathe slowly and count your breaths)
- Stamp on the spot  
(some people find this helps control their breathing)
- Focus on your senses  
(taste mint-flavoured gum or cuddle something soft)
- Use a grounding technique to help you feel more in control  
(such as playing a memory game; focusing on one of your senses; reciting a passage from your favourite book or film that you know off by heart)

Panic attacks usually pass within 5-20 minutes. Then it’s important to do something kind for yourself afterwards.

## *Reach out for professional help*

If you ever feel like it is all too much, or that it's simply time to take the step - you can talk to a qualified mental health professional.

It's good to start with your GP, or you may have access to a Mental Health First Aider at your organisation who can confidently offer you options to explore.

If you don't feel like you can talk to someone face to face, there are a number of mental health charities that you can contact via phone or email. The Samaritans are available 24/7, you can call them on 116 123.

