



UNIVERSITY of
BRADFORD

Counselling Service

Anxiety & Panic

*Information
and self-help*

What is Anxiety?

When your brain sees danger it triggers the release of hormones that prepare you to fight that danger or run from it. This has an impact on every part of you - body, mind, emotions and behaviour - and this impact is what we feel as ANXIETY.

- You can feel bodily symptoms like your heart going faster, shortness of breath, faintness, sweating, churning stomach.
- You can feel emotional responses like tearfulness, nervousness, fear, a longing to withdraw or close down.
- You can find your thinking confused, unfocussed, full of mistakes, forgetful.
- You might be finding it hard to make decisions, take on new challenges or even do certain every day activities.
- You might find yourself behaving more aggressively.
- You might be smoking or drinking more alcohol.
- You may be struggling to sleep or eat regularly.

How can I manage panic?

Sometimes your anxiety can be intense enough to trigger a panic attack, with physical symptoms intense enough to make you feel like you can't breathe or are even having a heart attack. You can look after yourself in these situations using the following simple techniques.

- Slow your breathing. Too much oxygen makes things worse, so cup your hands over your mouth & nose and breathe like this for a few moments.
- Make sure your feet are planted on the ground and your legs aren't crossed - this will ease the work your heart has to do.
- Distract yourself. For example, how many people in the room are wearing red or how many desks are there in the lecture room? Try counting backwards down from 100 to 1.
- Talk kindly to yourself and remind yourself that this will soon be over and isn't going to kill you.

How can I help myself?

The more you can do over time to reduce your general levels of anxiety, the better you will cope when a crisis hits. It is useful to attend to everyday things that will help.

- Sleep; a regular and reliable sleep routine reduces anxiety.
- Exercise; this breaks down stress hormones and helps us sleep so it offers a double benefit. It might be a sport or just a brisk walk around campus every day; whatever works for you.
- Relaxation; the more skilful you are at this the more you can fight back panic attacks. Our website has some downloads to help you practice.
- Eating and drinking; Regular meals with a balance of foods can really help. Drinks containing high levels of caffeine and sugar (eg coffee, Coke etc) or alcohol will impact anxiety levels and sleep so it is useful to manage your intake.
- Talk; share some of your worries with friends or family rather than struggling on alone. You could make an appointment with a counsellor who would help you manage your anxiety better.
- Take a break from your phone, lap-top, social media etc. Don't be afraid to turn them off!.

Try this simple breathing exercise

- Breathe in through your nose to the count of 4
- Hold the breath to the count of 2
- Release the breath through your mouth to the count of 6
- Repeat for as long as you need to feel calm

Remember...

We live in quite stressful times. There is often too much to do, too much going on. We can be on-line 24/7. So it is not surprising that we can sometimes feel overwhelmed with anxiety. And just using a few of these ideas can give you back some control.

On-line resources/self-help:

www.bradford.ac.uk/counselling for an extensive range of information and self-help material or to book an appointment.

Contacting the Counselling Service



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[www.bradford.ac.uk/
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