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Anxiety is a normal and essential part of all our lives.

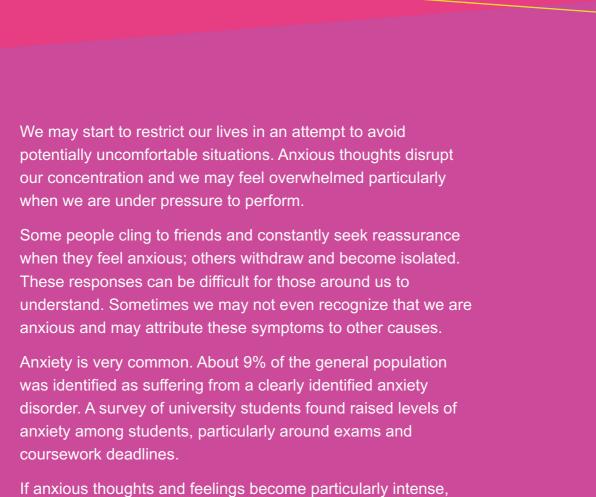
Anxiety can motivate achievement, push us to run faster in a race, to play better in a competition, to think more quickly in an exam. Anxiety also mobilizes us to deal with threatening situations. It is not possible or even desirable to eliminate anxiety and worry from our lives. Life would be dull and dangerous without it.

Anxiety is a physiological response to a perceived threat or danger. When we feel unsafe or uncomfortable, we experience heightened arousal, alertness and physical tension. Symptoms of anxiety may include:

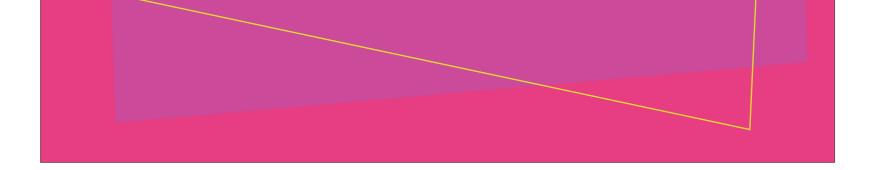
- Tense muscles, discomfort, unease, fidgeting , restlessness, tics, twitching , trembling.
- Headaches.
- Irritability, aggression and anger.
- Mind racing with worrying thoughts.
- Sleep disturbance and disturbing dreams.
- Breathlessness and over-breathing.
- Sweating, flushing and blushing
- Palpitations and racing heartbeat.
- Needing frequent trips to the toilet.
- Nausea and light-headedness.
- A sense of depersonalization and unreality .







messages to the brain can trigger a chain of automatic physiological reactions, which prepare us to fight, run away or hide from danger. This is known as the fight, flight or freeze response. Unfortunately these physiological responses are not helpful when we are sitting in an exam room, socializing or about to do a presentation. If the fight / flight / freeze response is triggered when there is no actual danger to act upon, this may lead to a panic attack.





PANIC ATTACKS

During a panic attack:

- Breathing becomes faster, causing hyperventilation.
- An excess of oxygen is inhaled, making us feel light -headed and faint.
- The heart beats faster, pumping blood to the muscles in preparation for action and producing a tingling sensation in hands and feet.
- Sweating increases.
- The body lightens the load for action by emptying the bladder and bowels.
- The urge to get out of the situation as quickly as possible becomes overwhelming .
- We may respond angrily if anything gets in our way

These symptoms can be frightening and bizarre and people often fear they are having a heart attack or going mad. In reality , this is a normal healthy protective mechanism that is being switched on at the wrong time.

WHAT CAUSES ANXIETY?

If we interpret a situation or event as a threat to our emotional or physical well being , then we will experience anxiety . These anxieties generally stem from some underlying fear of failure or of being rejected.

Worry and anxiety can become a habit that is hard to break and we may become anxious about feeling anxious. If our general level of anxiety becomes constantly raised, our alarm system may trigger more frequent panic attacks.

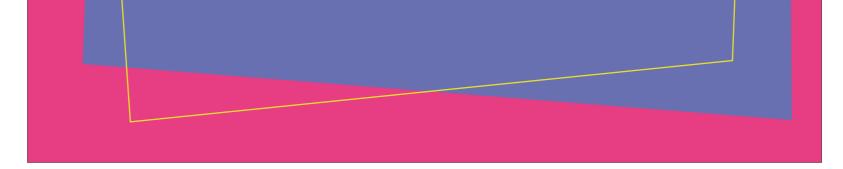
On the other hand, some people enjoy exams and large social gatherings; some people like spiders and even pay to go bungee jumping. It is not the situation itself , but the way we think about it that makes us feel anxious or worried. This gives us a useful clue to learning to control our anxiety .



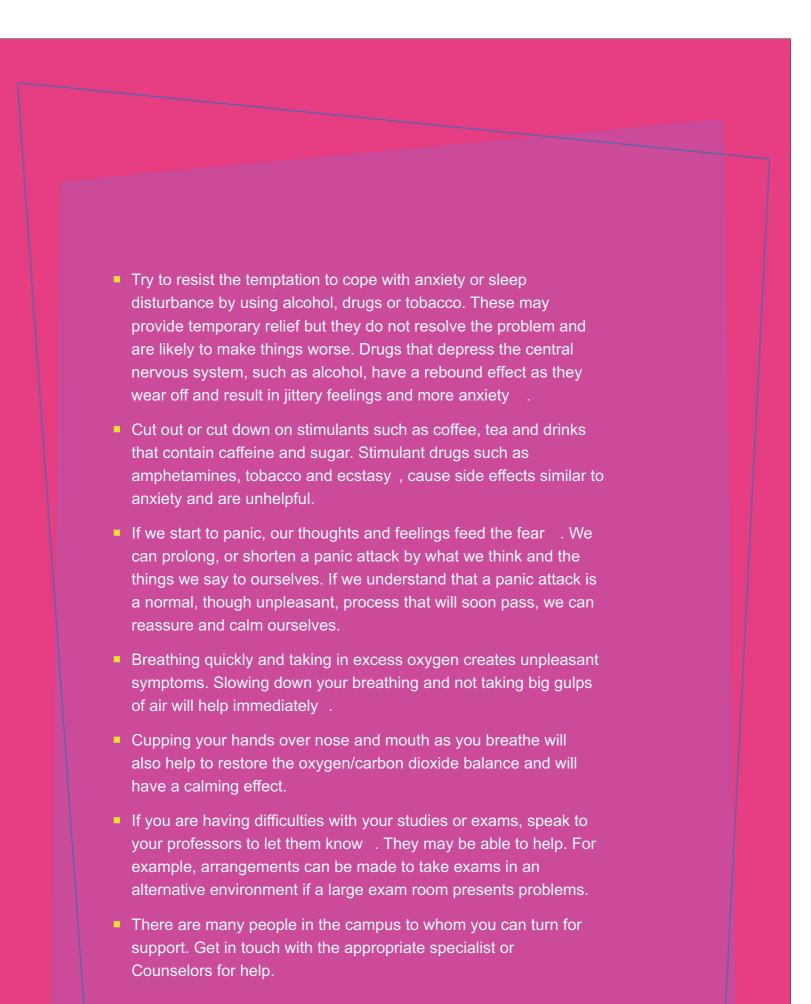




Medication may be helpful in coping with a crisis or reducing intense anxiety for a short period to allow you to develop some coping strategies. See your GP if you think this might help.

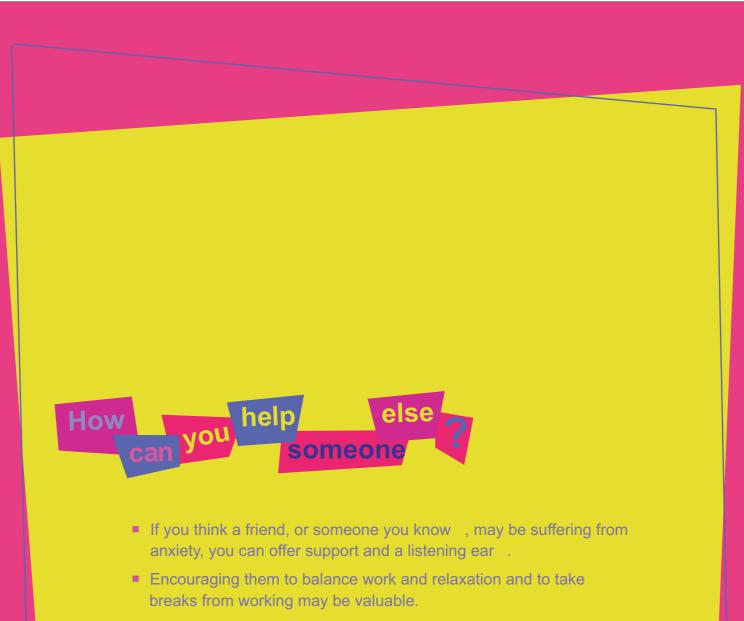












- Do not encourage them to use alcohol or drugs to relax or forget their problems. These may bring temporary relief , but they will not resolve the problem and may make it worse.
- There are limits to what you can do and you need to take care of yourself. It may be that a hostel mate or friend becomes particularly anxious at a time when you are also struggling with coursework or exams. sometimes demands for constant reassurance may become exhausting for you and provide no real relief for your friend. It may be that they need specialist help or you may need some support or advice yourself. If you are concerned about a friend, or someone who is having problems, then do not hesitate to contact the appropriate specialist on campus.





When specialist appropriate ?

Sometimes, self-help combined with practical and emotional support from friends and family may enable you to manage your anxiety. If, however, you feel anxious or uncomfortable talking about personal issues with those around you, or if you feel too overwhelmed by anxiety to take the first steps to regaining control, there are a number of resources on campus where you will find information, advice, treatment or support.

Approach the appropriate specialist or Counselor on campus whenever necessary.Depending on the nature of the difficulty , different approaches may be suggested:

- At times of acute crises, medication can be helpful in reducing symptoms and allowing you to regain control
- If you experience panic attacks, specific techniques may help you to learn to cope
- If anxiety is a problem, counseling may help you to understand the nature of your difficulty , to learn how to manage the symptoms and to address the thoughts and feelings that create and maintain anxiety
- Where a specific phobia is causing difficulty , you may benefit from learning to cope directly with the situation rather than restricting your activities in order to avoid it.

