

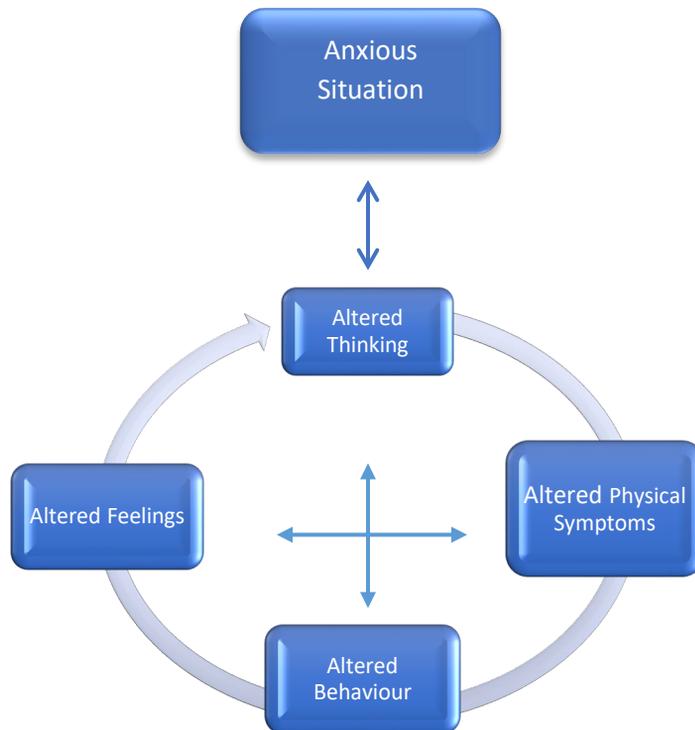
# WORRY & ANXIETY

## SESSION 2 COURSE WORKBOOK



## REDUCING PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS OF ANXIETY

In today's session we will look at the impact of anxiety on the body, its role in the 'vicious circle' as outlined below, and some of the things we can do to manage the physical symptoms of anxiety.



### Task 1

What do you notice in your body when you are worried and feel anxious? Make a note below



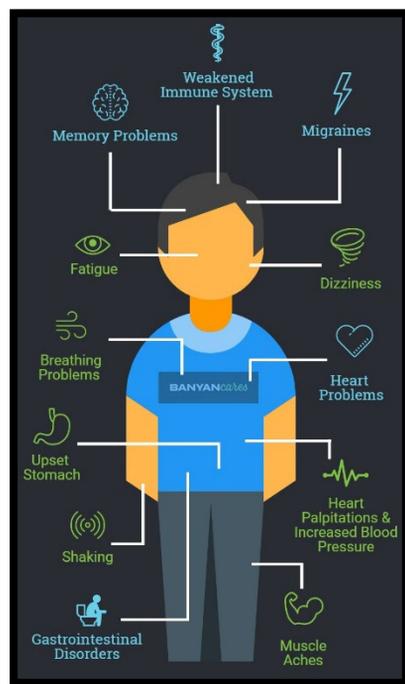
## FIGHT OR FLIGHT RESPONSE (AND FREEZE)

When we sense danger or threat, we experience a strong emotion called fear which leads us to feel anxious. Fear and anxiety trigger a chain of automatic events in our bodies that prepare us for action. This is often called the ‘fight or flight’ response and can be traced back to our need for survival in the past. The ‘fight or flight’ response is a normal and helpful response when we are faced with immediate physical danger or threat. For example if you heard a burglar breaking into your house in the middle of the night your fight or flight response would get turned on. As a result, your body would go through a series of physical changes.

However it is unhelpful when it is switched on if the threat is low or happens in situations when there is no ‘real’ danger or threat to life (e.g. when speaking in front of people or queuing up in the supermarket). Some people can feel so anxious for various reasons when faced with these types of situations that the fear in their mind causes the fight and flight response in their body even.

### Common Physical Sensations

1. Your heart beats faster: To allow your heart to take blood where it is most needed i.e. legs to run faster. You are not having a heart attack – this is a normal response to anxiety.
2. Your breathing quickens and becomes shallow: Helps oxygen to be carried around your lungs, arms and legs via bloodstream. Side effects may be chest pain, breathlessness, choking feeling or blurred vision. Although you may feel dizzy you will not faint. To faint your blood pressure has to drop – when we are anxious, because our hearts beat faster, our blood pressure is temporarily raised.
3. Your muscles start to tense: This happens to make sure we can stand and fight or run away, ready for action.



## What is a panic attack?

This is when there is a sudden surge of adrenaline and our body responds very quickly to the perceived threat. The symptoms of a panic attack are similar to anxiety except they are more intense. If you had to rate how anxious you feel on a scale of 0-10, with 10 being the most anxious a panic attack would be at an 8-10. A panic attack can last for between 5-20 minutes. Anxiety symptoms can be less intense but can last for a longer period.

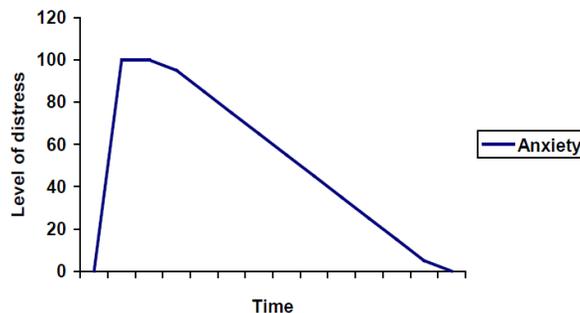


## Panic attack or heart attack? Know the difference!

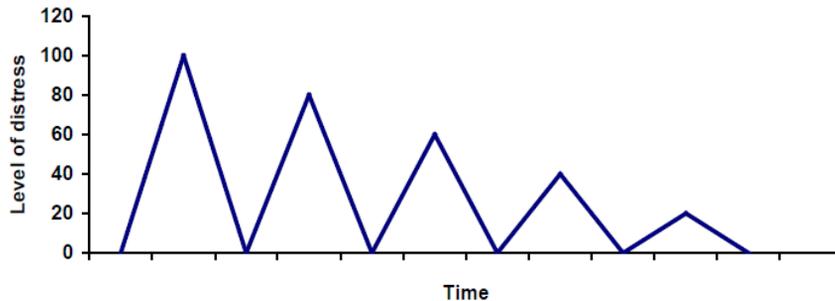
It is crucial to remember that a panic attack is NOT a heart attack. The main difference is that a person who is in the midst of a heart attack often vomits. A person suffering through a panic attack may feel sick but vomiting is very rare. Furthermore, people experiencing a heart attack describe the chest pain as crushing with the pressure felt in the centre of the chest which may extend to the left arm, neck and back. In contrast, a person who is suffering a panic attack describes the chest pain as sharp, felt just over the heart. Also, the symptoms of panic attack usually start wearing off after 10 minutes when you start a process of recovery. Finally, heart attack victims will rarely experience the rapid breathing that accompanies panic attacks.

**PANIC ATTACKS CAN BE VERY STRESSFUL AND UNCOMFORTABLE BUT THEY ARE NOT DANGEROUS. THEY WILL CAUSE YOU NO HARM.**

Although the physical sensations you experience when you are anxious can be unpleasant and scary, they are not harmful. Although you may naturally want to escape the situation that is making you feel worse, you will find that if you are able to face your feared situation, your anxiety will come down even if you stay in that particular situation as illustrated in the graph below.



When you face the feared situation again and again, known as habituation, your anxiety will be slightly less than the time before and may pass more quickly. This should happen each time you face the feared situation and is illustrated in the graph below.

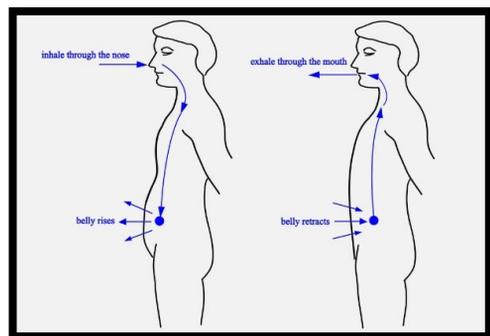


## WAYS TO MANAGE THE PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS OF ANXIETY

### CONTROLLING YOUR BREATHING

One of the most common symptoms of anxiety is hyperventilation or over-breathing – breathing too fast and taking in more oxygen than you need. This can cause tightness of the chest and lots of other unpleasant sensations such as feeling faint.

Breathing is one of the easiest physical sensations to control by yourself. Try controlling your breathing by following the instructions below. You should practise calming your breathing many times before using it to control the symptoms of anxiety – you may find it takes many attempts before you are able to breathe calmly when you feel panicky. It is a good idea to practise this technique when you do not feel anxious so that you can use it easily when you do experience anxiety.



Step to controlled breathing (also known as belly breathing or diaphragmatic breathing)

1. Place one hand on your chest, and one on your stomach
2. Imagine a balloon in your stomach
3. Breathe in counting 1...2...3 slowly (you should notice when you breathe in, your stomach should move out slightly as if the balloon was inflating)
4. Breathe out counting 1...2...3 slowly (you should notice when you breathe out your stomach should move in slightly as if balloon was deflating)

**RELAXATION:**

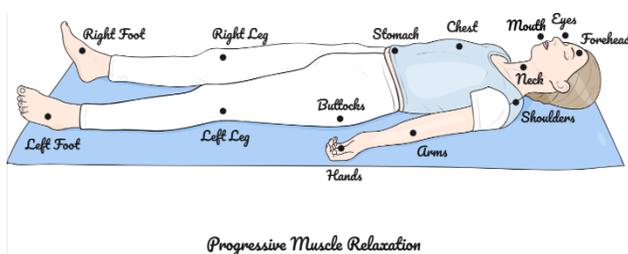
Relaxation is a very useful way of coping with the physical symptoms of anxiety. When someone has been anxious for a long time, they are often unaware of the tension in their muscles, or the knot in their stomach, which is a result of the body’s reaction to stress. When we are stressed or anxious the muscles in our bodies tense up and this can cause uncomfortable bodily feelings like headache, backache, or tightness in the chest. The aches and pains of tension can cause mental worry, making us even more anxious and tense. People who are anxious and tense are often tired.

Progressive Muscular Relaxation is one of the easiest forms of relaxation and involves tensing and relaxing all the major muscle groups in the body.

Find a quiet place that you can sit or preferably lie down. When you are comfortable, close your eyes. Try to clear your head of everything other than how your body feels. When you feel you have blocked out as much as you can start muscular relaxation by tightening and releasing each of your body muscles in turn. Starting with your face, squeeze and tighten the muscles in your forehead and hold for around 10 seconds before releasing and relaxing them. Do this for each area of the body working down to your feet and toes. Try and only thinking about how each area feels when tightened then relaxed.

**A COMMON SEQUENCE...**

- |                       |                      |                |
|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| 1. Face               | 6. Chest             | 11. Left calf  |
| 2. Neck and shoulders | 7. Stomach           | 12. Right calf |
| 3. Left arm and hand  | 8. Hips and buttocks | 13. Left foot  |
| 4. Right arm and hand | 9. Left thigh        | 14. Right foot |
| 5. Back               | 10. Right thigh      |                |



## IMAGINAL RELAXATION

You will find tracks on imaginal relaxation on the Wellbeing website: <http://wellbeing-glasgow.org.uk> or if you had an image of your own calming place from the group exercises today continue to use this.

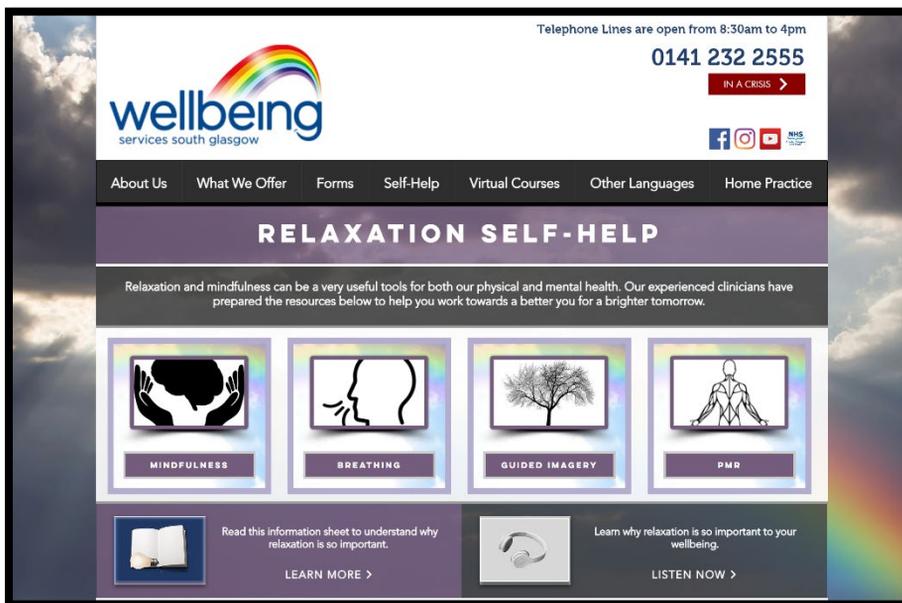
## DISTRACTION

Thinking about the physical symptoms of anxiety will only make them worse. Try some distraction techniques e.g.

- Reading or talking
- Mental 'games'
- Describing your surroundings
- Staying active

## Other helpful ways to relax:

- Relax your shoulders and avoid tightening and stiffening up.
- Avoid fidgeting.
- Keep your concentration on your surroundings – the 'here and now'.
- Stay calm and don't rush e.g. slow down your speech.
- Talking to yourself in a positive way can be helpful e.g. say to yourself 'relax I can deal with this' or 'keep calm it will pass'.



The screenshot shows the 'RELAXATION SELF-HELP' page on the Wellbeing website. At the top, it features the Wellbeing logo (services south glasgow) and a telephone number 0141 232 2555, with a note that telephone lines are open from 8:30am to 4pm. There is a red 'IN A CRISIS' button with a right arrow. Below the logo are social media icons for Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and NHS. A navigation menu includes 'About Us', 'What We Offer', 'Forms', 'Self-Help', 'Virtual Courses', 'Other Languages', and 'Home Practice'. The main heading is 'RELAXATION SELF-HELP'. Below this, a paragraph states: 'Relaxation and mindfulness can be a very useful tools for both our physical and mental health. Our experienced clinicians have prepared the resources below to help you work towards a better you for a brighter tomorrow.' There are four main resource boxes: 'MINDFULNESS' with a hand icon, 'BREATHING' with a profile icon, 'GUIDED IMAGERY' with a tree icon, and 'PMR' with a human figure icon. At the bottom, there are two smaller boxes: 'Read this information sheet to understand why relaxation is so important.' with a 'LEARN MORE >' button, and 'Learn why relaxation is so important to your wellbeing.' with a 'LISTEN NOW >' button and a headset icon.



## HOMEWORK

- ✓ Practice controlled breathing, progressive muscle relaxation and visualisation daily over the next week.
- ✓ Use the relaxation diary to monitor and measure your relaxation levels before and after each exercise.
- ✓ Use distraction techniques.
- ✓ Try out reducing caffeine and alcohol along with taking regular exercise to help make a positive difference to how you feel.



## My Relaxation Diary

***Use a scale of 0-10 with, 0= least relaxed to 10= most relaxed.***

Pay attention to what exercise were most relaxing for you e.g. breathing, muscular relaxation, imaginal.

Date / Time	Type of Relaxation	Comments	Relaxation level before 0-10	Relaxation level after 0-10