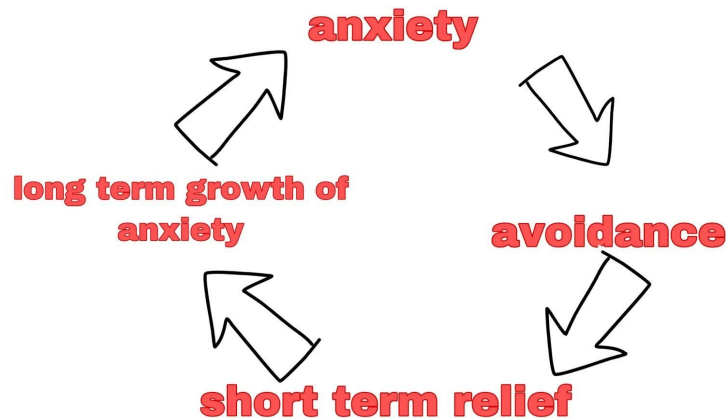


# Anxiety and panic advice

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Anxiety can be a vicious cycle; breaking this cycle and being self aware of what's happening can really help.



Understanding where anxiety in general comes from is the first step in managing it.

Anxiety is a **natural response** to stress, and panic is a sudden sensation of fear. Most people experience occasional feelings of anxiety or panic as a natural instinctive response to a dangerous or stressful situation. However, sometimes this can happen in situations that pose no real danger at all. When it gets to the point where it **inhibits your existence** day to day is when you need to reach out and manage your anxiety.

I have compiled a whole lot of activities, techniques, and coping mechanisms that I really hope will help you out.

## 1. BREATHING

This may seem obvious but it has been scientifically proven that certain breathing techniques can reduce feelings of anxiety and panic in both the short term and the long term. It's easy to forget to do simple things like literally just breath in the moment, but when you do remember to take note of how you are breathing maybe try out these techniques:

**1. Breathe into your nose for 4 counts**

**Hold for 4 counts**

**Exhale from your mouth for 6 counts**

**Repeat as many times as you like.**

**Try to count in your head as this distracts you as well.**

**(This technique causes your nervous system to switch from fight or flight mode to a parasympathetic state.)**

**2. On your in breath, imagine serenity, calm, and peace filling your lungs**

**Holding your breath, absorb that feeling**

**On the out breath, imagine all worries and fears leaving your lungs and floating away.**

**3. Without altering how you are breathing, try to notice where in your body you feel your breath and just focus on that feeling for as long as you want to.**

## 2. MIND MAPS

One thing that I have found useful from cognitive behavioural therapy is writing a worry or anxious thought in the middle of a mind map and coming up with as many possible solutions as possible around it. I then go through and rate each solution in order of how much I like the solution out of 10. Whichever option has the highest score is the one I will try - you can even make a step by step action plan for the solution you like best.

### 3. JOURNAL

**Writing things down** materialises any worrying thoughts and gets them out of your head and onto paper so that they aren't constantly in the back of your mind.

Repressing worries doesn't get rid of them - it just means they will come back later on in another form and all pile on top of each other and get even more overwhelming. But, by writing it down you can always come back to it without having to be constantly reminded of it, or you can individually work through them as they happen. This also links to the technique of 'worrying' time which I write about later on.

It's also helpful to be able to look back and figure out if there are any specific things which trigger feelings of anxiety or panic, allowing you to be able to confront and deal with them face on.

### 4. GROUNDING TECHNIQUES

The most common grounding technique is the 5,4,3,2,1 technique. It doesn't help everyone but if you feel like you are spiralling, stop and do the following;

1. **Notice 5 things you can see**
2. **Notice 4 things you can feel**
3. **Notice 3 things you can hear**
4. **Notice 2 things you can smell**
5. **Notice 1 thing you can taste**

By doing this, you are focusing all of your sensations in the moment and reminding yourself of your surroundings and reassuring yourself that you are safe and in no danger.

### 5. MUSCLE RELAXATION

No matter what circumstance you're in - doing a simple body scan can really help calm down your body and mind. I use this technique alongside meditation but it isn't exclusive to meditation. Basically you just start at the top of your head and notice how you physically are feeling. If you notice any tension, send positive and relaxing energy to that area as you scan down your arms, torso, legs etc.

## 6. CHALLENGING THOUGHTS

Irrational thoughts and worries can be really scary and overwhelming. If possible, single out a worry; for example "I will not get through this situation." and either try challenging it by saying the opposite; "I can and will get through this situation."

**OR** imagine someone you reallllyy dislike (I always pick Donald Trump lol) and imagine them saying it to you. For me, this makes me want to completely prove it wrong as a "f you" to them.

## 7. IMAGERY

Imagine a place where you feel your absolute calmest. Build up a picture of it in your mind. What can you see, feel, smell etc? Imagine the emotions and feelings you get in that place. Now this place will exist forever in your mind; when you are overwhelmed, go there in your mind for a bit.

## 8. PRACTICAL VS HYPOTHETICAL

It is important to distinguish practical and hypothetical worries.

**PRACTICAL** worries are worries about things that are happening right now and can be dealt with in some way.

**HYPOTHETICAL** worries are about things that are not happening and may not necessarily ever happen.

## 9. SET 'WORRYING' TIME

Giving yourself time to worry about things can be a healthy way of managing anxious thoughts. If you notice a worrying thought - make a quick note of it and then try to get on with your day, knowing that you have an allocated time to revisit the worry and rationally work through it.

## 10. SELF COMPASSION

Be patient and understanding with yourself as if you were a child. When a child makes a mistake, you forgive them and allow them the space to mess up and learn from it. Why not do the same for yourself? Nobody is perfect, and you are not a bad person for making mistakes as long as you acknowledge them and forgive yourself.

Practice self compassion and be understanding of your own feelings and emotions, as you are of those you love.

## 11. MANTRAS/AFFIRMATIONS

Repeating affirmations can relieve anxiety in any situation. In moments of panic or anxiety, repeat calming mantras either out loud or in your head. By channeling this energy, it will manifest physically and mentally by calming you down.

Examples:

"I am safe."

"I am in control."

"I can leave this situation if I need space."

"This is temporary and will pass."

"I am not alone."

"I am enough."

"It's ok to make mistakes."

## Final Notes:

- Don't worry if you feel like nothing is working, it takes repetition and practice to be able to manage anxiety.
- Even if you are having a bad time, that doesn't mean you have failed or are getting worse, it's a part of the whole process. Sometimes it gets worse before it gets better.
- Keep going! It will get easier and I am so proud of you.
- Progress isn't linear, it can be more like a rollercoaster. But that doesn't mean that you're not getting better, slip ups are all a part of recovery.

## FURTHER RESOURCES

[anxietyuk.org.uk](https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk)

[mind.org.uk](https://www.mind.org.uk)

[pandemicmentalhealthresources.com](https://www.pandemicmentalhealthresources.com)

If you need someone to talk to I'm always happy to listen.

Alice xxx

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