

ANXIETY · UNDERSTANDING & MANAGING IT

Understanding anxiety

Your body's alarm system, doing its job — just a little too often.



In the body

Racing heart, tight chest



In your thoughts

Worry, “what if”, dread



In your behaviour

Avoiding, over-checking

01 Why anxiety happens

Anxiety is your fight-or-flight response — a burst of adrenaline that sharpens focus and readies you to act. It is meant to be brief and occasional. The difficulty begins when the alarm starts firing at everyday situations that aren't truly dangerous: a meeting, a message, a crowded train.

02 Why it sticks around

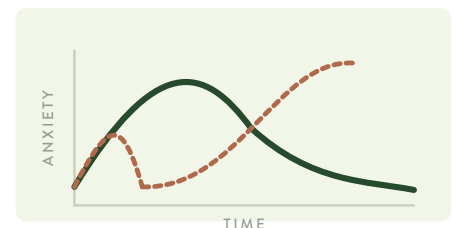
Avoidance is the engine. Stepping around what makes us anxious brings instant relief — which quietly teaches the brain the threat was real, so the fear returns a little stronger. Facing it gradually does the opposite: anxiety rises, peaks, and falls on its own as the body relearns that it is safe.

03 What genuinely helps

- ✓ Understanding how anxiety works, so symptoms feel less frightening
- ✓ Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) to test anxious predictions
- ✓ Gradual, planned exposure to feared situations
- ✓ Slow breathing and grounding for the physical surge
- ✓ Protecting sleep and easing back on caffeine

THE EVIDENCE

Face it, and it fades



— If you stay — If you avoid

Facing a fear lets anxiety peak, then fall. Avoiding brings fast relief — but a higher spike next time.

PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

The 4-4-6 breath

Breathe in 4s
Hold 4s
Breathe out 6s

A longer out-breath signals safety.

WHEN TO SEEK HELP

If anxiety stops you working, studying or seeing people — or you find yourself avoiding more and more — a psychologist can help. Ask your GP about a Mental Health Treatment Plan for Medicare rebates.

IN CRISIS — 24/7

Lifeline 13 11 14 · Emergency 000
mindhealth.com.au/urgent-help

THE TAKEAWAY

Anxiety isn't dangerous — it's an alarm that has become oversensitive. It can be turned down.

TALK TO US WHEN YOU'RE READY

Parramatta & online, Australia-wide · mindhealth.com.au

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