

Simple ways to calm anxious thoughts and feelings

All of us experience anxiety to some degree, it's a perfectly normal human emotion. However, for some anxiety plays a larger role than it could or should in daily life and finding ways to manage crisis moments when difficult thoughts and feelings threaten to become too much can be a key part of managing day to day.

We've shared a few strategies below which are easy to try and might work for you – they're all worked for someone. It's very much about trial and error and having a few different ideas up your sleeve to try. As you get better at managing attacks of anxiety, you may find they become less frequent as one of the key triggers for anxiety is being anxious about being anxious.

Breathing techniques

As anxiety builds, our bodies go into physiological overdrive. Our heart may be beating fast, our palms sweating, our breathing becomes shallow and fast. Focusing on calming our breathing, taking long, deep breaths can help the body to begin to reset and calm.

- Take a long breath in through your nose,
- Holding it for a few seconds
- Take a long breath out through your mouth
- You can also try blowing bubbles (either real or imaginary).

If you are with someone who is experiencing an anxiety attack, practising this type of breathing whilst sitting with them can also help their body to calm and regulate, as after a little time, their body's rhythms will start to echo your own.

Listening to music

Music can be a great mood changer. When you need something to calm you, classical music can be especially helpful – but it's about finding what works for you. Creating a playlist of tracks you find calming and keeping it with you (e.g. on your phone) for crisis moments can be a great way to find rapid relief and is especially helpful just as you begin to feel an attack coming on to try and prevent it escalating.

Colouring in

Colouring in is a great stress reliever and can help to quickly quell feelings of fear, panic and anxiety by giving us a new and easy focus. Why not download some [colouring pages for relieving stress and anxiety?](#)

Walking

Getting outside and enjoying some fresh air can be a real boost and actively trying to push all other thoughts from your mind whilst focusing on the sights, sounds and smells around you can be a great, proactive way to calm down or refocus.

Talking to someone

All the time that we keep our worries and anxieties in our heads, they grow and grow, sometimes out of all proportion. It's surprising how much more manageable they can seem when we speak them aloud. Even if talking doesn't reduce the scale of our concerns, it can feel like a relief in its own right. Sometimes we're reluctant to open up for fear of burdening a family member or a friend – but it's always worth remembering that there are a range of confidential helplines who will offer non-judgemental listening twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week – for example Samaritans 08457 90 90 90.

Exercise

When your body is pumped full of adrenaline because you are feeling anxious or fearful, a good way to manage it can be to find a productive way to burn it off. Going for a run, swim, cycle, climb, dance... whatever is your preferred physical activity can really help.

Making it through the next minute

Finally, it's important to keep things in perspective. We only ever need to make it through the next minute, and each time we do so, we will feel slightly better. Our bodies can only maintain a heightened sense of anxiety for a relatively short time before the body naturally starts to calm (much like you could not maintain a sprinting pace indefinitely when running – your body is going through a roughly equivalent reaction). Try using a countdown timer to help yourself manage one minute at a time, or challenging yourself to try to control your breathing for the length of one calming track can be a good start.