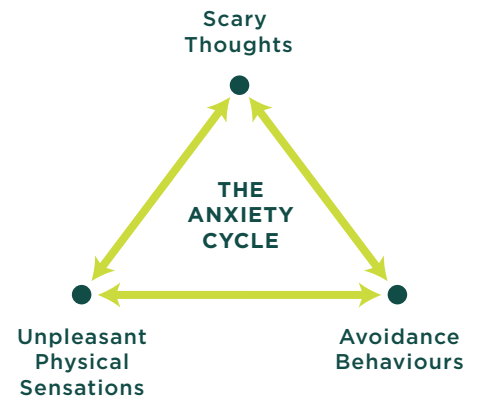


DID YOU KNOW?

- Anxiety is common. All of us experience anxiety from time to time, and 1 in 4 adults have an anxiety disorder.
- Anxiety is similar to the experience of fear - the main difference is that anxiety occurs in the absence of real danger. We perceive a situation as a threat, but in reality it is not dangerous.
- Anxiety creates a cascade of physical changes, frequently resulting in increased heart rate, rapid breathing and muscle tension, to name but a few. This is the body's natural and automatic response to perceived danger - imagined or real - and is often called the "fight or flight" response.
- Anxiety also involves our thoughts (what we say to ourselves), and behaviours (what we do, or our actions). Together, our thoughts, physical sensations and behaviours feed off one another to create and maintain anxiety over time.



TOOLS FOR TAMING YOUR ANXIETY

The good news is that anxiety is reversible. You can do this through calming your body, changing the way you think about situations, and/or facing your fears.

CALM YOUR BODY

Diaphragmatic breathing deactivates the fight-or-flight response and settles the nervous system. Breathing in this way is shown to reduce things like heart rate, muscle tension, and blood pressure, which can all spike when you are feeling stressed or anxious. You can try this breathing style lying on your back with one hand resting on your chest and the other on your belly. The hand on your stomach should rise when you inhale, and lower when you exhale. For more information and other guided breathing exercises check out our video here.

Progressive muscle relaxation relaxes muscles that have been activated by anxiety. It involves going through the body and tensing and then relaxing different major muscle groups. Progressive muscle relaxation has been shown to reduce overall tension and feelings of anxiety. For more information, see How to do Progressive Muscle Relaxation.

Movement is a powerful way to ease anxiety. You don't have to be an elite athlete to reap the benefits: research indicates that small amounts of physical activity can make a meaningful difference. If regular physical activity isn't already part of your lifestyle, start small. Ten or 15 minutes of activity is a great way to start. Be creative and find an activity that you enjoy doing. Try a brisk walk, a bike ride, or anything else that gets you moving.

CHALLENGE YOUR THINKING

People with anxiety tend to see situations as more dangerous and/or important than they actually are. And like everyone, they implicitly believe their thoughts without pausing to check the evidence or think about other ways of seeing the situation. Refer to our *Unhelpful Thought Patterns: The Dirty Dozen* handout for more details.

Next Time You Are Anxious And Worried About Something, Ask Yourself These Questions:

- What are other explanations for, or ways of interpreting, this situation?
- What are the realistic odds the thing I am fearing will actually happen?
- Is there an in-between where things are not perfect but not a disaster?
- How much does this situation matter in the long-term scheme of things?

FACE YOUR FEARS

People with anxiety tend to avoid the things they fear. Although avoidance helps people feel better in the moment, it also reinforces the anxiety cycle and causes people to feel worse longer term. This is because avoidance prevents you from experiencing the situation and learning that the thing you fear isn't dangerous or a threat. As a result, you continue to expect the worst.

Face your fears by gradually and repeatedly going into feared situations until you feel less anxious. Start with situations that are less scary, and work your way up to facing things that cause you a great deal of anxiety. After a while, your anxiety will naturally lessen. Refer to our *Face Your Fears* handout for more details.

MY ANXIETY PLAN

Among The Tools Listed Below, Choose One You Would Like To Start Doing.

- Diaphragmatic Breathing Physical Activity Challenging Your Thinking
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation Facing Your Fears

Now That You Have Chosen, Make A Plan For When And How You Will Do It.

When I Will Start:
(within the next week is great!)

Changes I Can Make To My Environment To Help Me Remember/Stick To My Plan:

Days Of Weeks/Times Of Day I Will Do It:

Where I Will Do It:

Supportive People I Can Tell About My Plan And Who Can Help Me Stay On Track:

Now double check: on a scale from 1 to 10, how confident are you that you will be able to start and stick to your plan? (1 = no way!; 10 = no problem!) If you selected anything below a 7, rework your plan to make it a little smaller to start. The easier you make it, the better chance you have of doing it. And remember, small changes lead to bigger results when sustained over time. Once you have incorporated one tool into your routine, you can add another after 3-4 weeks.

ANXIETY RESOURCES AVAILABLE THROUGH TALL TREE

Tall Tree offers a range of services to help people with anxiety. Our exceptional team of mental health professionals offer one-time workshops, group courses, and 1-on-1 therapy. We also offer yoga and meditation, personal training, and nutrition coaching.

If you aren't sure where to start, connect with our intake coordinator who will provide guidance, clarification, and a conversation about what might work best for you. You can contact our coordinator by phone at **(250) 978-0789** or email **mentalhealth@talltreehealth.ca**.