

# Tips for reducing anxiety

## #WellbeingStMarys

St Mary's  
University  
Twickenham  
London

Student  
Services



## Techniques



**Deep breathing:** If you're not focused on how to calm your body through slow, intentional belly-breathing, you're missing out. Belly-breathing is free, location independent, and easy to implement – try it now! Slowly, take in a deep breath and let the air fill your belly. When you are ready, allow the air to be released. Try this three times and see it work wonders on your anxiety levels.

**Mindfulness:** Studies show that 5-10 minutes of mindfulness a day can have a long term impact on reducing anxiety. You can look on YouTube or use the Headspace app on your phone. We also have free university mindfulness sessions twice a week – check SimmSpace for details.

Also, you can download, **Breathe | Calming Reminders for Mindful Breathing:** what this app will do is remind you of your breath throughout your day so you become aware and automatically start mindfulness no matter what you are doing. This is great because it doesn't detract from your daily routine.

**Earthing:** There are natural antidepressants in soil, which is why gardeners are generally happy people. Nowadays, we do not get enough contact with the earth. If you can't start gardening, try and get at least 5-10 minutes a day with your shoes and socks off so that your skin is in contact with the natural ground. Make sure the weather is warm though!

**Practice Gratitude:** Make a mental note of the positive things in your life. Remember everything in life is temporary – the good, the bad, and the ugly.

## Body work



**Exercise:** You need to get cardiovascular exercise in regularly – besides clearing the mind, firing up the endorphins, and helping you sleep soundly at night, researchers have found that individuals who exercise vigorously and regularly were 25 percent less likely to develop an anxiety disorder within five years.

**Walking:** Walking in a natural environment, such as in a park or by the river, for at least 20 minutes at a time, has many beneficial anxiety reducing qualities. Give it a try!

**Yoga/Tai Chi/Martial Arts:** Doing some body work that works with your breath is really important. Not only are your emotions stored in your body that can be worked out with Yoga, Tai Chi or martial arts, but also they also help calm the nervous system.

**Massage:** Get a regular massage to move the energy in your body. Ask a friend to give you a massage and/or find a low cost place.

**Sound healing:** Sound is able to harmonise the frequency of our brainwaves, therefore restoring us to a sense of balance. It is worth getting into listening to music and/or going to sound healings to help with anxiety.

# Self-Care



**Reduce caffeine and fizzy drinks:** Caffeine is the most widely used psychoactive drug in our society today, which can make you feel awake but also ramp up your anxiety levels. Fizzy drinks also can be detrimental as they can deplete your body of vital vitamins and minerals. Try to stick to fresh juices or water instead.

**Sleep:** Sleep deprivation is a huge anxiety culprit. Inadequate shut-eye can amplify the brain's anticipatory reactions, which increases overall anxiety levels.

**Use lavender:** Lavender oil has many healing properties and can be used as a natural remedy to reduce anxiety and other nervous conditions. You can use it as an oil or flower to smell.

# Therapy



**Therapy tip 1:** Know feelings are not facts. Your feelings of anxiety are not always accurate. This is tricky because many of our negative thoughts are automatic, deeply internalized, and rooted in the unconscious.

**Therapy tip 2:** Remember that thoughts precede feelings. Negative thoughts lead to negative emotions, which lead to negative behaviours.

For example:

- Jocelyn wakes up and immediately thinks, *I'm gonna fail the PowerPoint presentation today. I just want to stay in bed all day*
- She feels unmotivated, nervous and sluggish
- She yells at her friends when they don't answer their phones fast enough because she feels bad.

## Therapy tip 3: STOPP

**Stop and step back** – Pause before acting immediately.

**Take a breath** – Take notice of your breath.

**Observe** – are my thoughts fact or opinion? Are they accurate, are they helpful? What unhelpful thinking habit am I using and where else can I focus my attention?

**Pull back** – Put in some perspective. Is there another way of looking at this? What would a friend say?

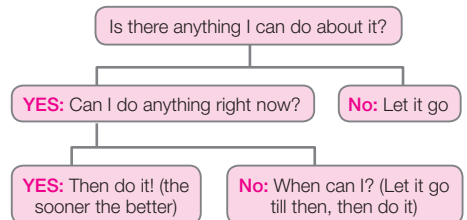
**Practise what works** – What has helped me before in this situation? What is best for me and most helpful for this situation?

## Therapy tip 4: Worry Tree

Worry is quite normal, we all do it. It may be unavoidable at times and it need not always be unhelpful. However, chronic or excessive worrying can affect physical and emotional health negatively.

Those who find frequent worrying interferes with daily function and wish to manage or minimise persistent worry may find it helpful to:

- **Write** worries down
- **Set aside** a certain amount of time (10-15 mins) each day to consider worries and avoiding thinking about them at other times in the day
- **Use the 'Worry Tree'** – using the Worry Tree helps us put our attention where it is most productive, alleviating the extra stress and wasted time of prolonged worry. A simplified version of the worry tree is below:



**Therapy tip 5:** Check out free online therapy resources on the internet:

[www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/resources/consumers.cfm](http://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/resources/consumers.cfm), and [web.nrw.nhs.uk/selfhelp](http://web.nrw.nhs.uk/selfhelp).

# GP



Your GP is a good place to talk about your anxiety as they may be able to refer you to services that can support you outside of University. They also have knowledge about any possible medication that you may find useful.