



West Lothian
Community Wellbeing Hub

Anxiety

Booklet 2 – Coping with anxiety

In this booklet...



Recognising unhelpful thinking styles



Challenging anxious thoughts



STOPP and think



Improving your overall wellbeing



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Progressive muscle relaxation









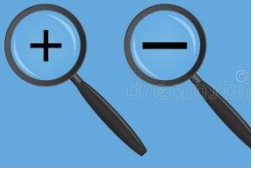
Guided imagery



Helpful apps and websites

Recognising unhelpful thinking habits

Mental filter 	This thinking involves a “filtering in” and “filtering out” process – a sort of “tunnel vision”, focussing on only one part of a situation and ignoring the rest. Usually this means looking at the negative parts of a situation and forgetting the positive parts, and the whole picture is coloured by what may be a single negative detail
Jumping to conclusions 	We jump to conclusions when we assume that we know what someone else is thinking (mind reading) and when we make predictions about what is going to happen in the future (predictive thinking)
Personalisation 	This involves blaming yourself for everything that goes wrong or could go wrong, even when you may only be partly responsible or not responsible at all. You might be taking 100% responsibility for the occurrence of external events.
Catastrophising 	Catastrophising occurs when we “blow things out of proportion” and we view the situation as terrible, awful, dreadful, and horrible even though the reality is that the problem itself is quite small.
Black and white thinking 	This thinking style involves seeing only one extreme or the other. You are wrong or right, good or bad and so on. There are no in-betweens or shades of grey.

<p>Should-ing and must-ing</p> 	<p>Sometimes by saying “I should...” or “I must...” you can put unreasonable demands or pressure on yourself and others. Although these statements are not always unhelpful (e.g. “I should not get drunk and drive home”), they can sometimes create unrealistic expectations.</p>
<p>Over-generalisation</p> 	<p>When we over-generalise, we take one instance in the past or present, and impose it on all current or future stations. If we say “you always...” or “everyone...” or “I never...” then we are probably over-generalising.</p>
<p>Labelling</p> 	<p>We label ourselves and others when we make global statements based on behaviour in specific situations. We might use this label even though there are many more examples that aren’t consistent with that label.</p>
<p>Emotional reasoning</p> 	<p>This thinking style involves basing your view of situations or yourself on the way you are feeling. For example, the only evidence that something bad is going to happen is that you feel like something bad is going to happen.</p>
<p>Magnification and minimisation</p> 	<p>In this thinking style, you magnify the positive attributes of other people and minimise your own positive attributes. It’s as though you’re explaining away your own positive characteristics.</p>

Challenging anxious thoughts

Anxiety can be a healthy emotion – it forces us to focus on our problems, and work hard to solve them. But sometimes, anxiety grows out of control and does just the opposite. It decreases our ability to solve problems. When this happens irrational thoughts often play a role.

In this exercise, we will practice catching our irrational thoughts, and replacing them with rational alternatives. With enough practice, this will become a natural process that can help you manage anxiety.

Describe a common situation that triggers your anxiety:

Anxiety distorts our thinking by causing us to overestimate the likelihood of something going wrong and imagine the potential consequences as worse than they really are. Sometimes just taking a moment to think about these facts can help us recognise our irrational thoughts.

Imagine you were faced with the anxiety-provoking situation from above. Describe the:

Worst outcome:

Best outcome:

Likely outcome:

Imagine the worse outcome comes true. Would it still matter (circle your answer):

1 week from now:	Yes	No
1 month from now:	Yes	No
1 year from now:	Yes	No

Usually anxious thoughts focus on the worst possible outcomes, even when they aren't likely. For example, a person who is nervous about giving a speech might think: "I'm going to forget everything and embarrass myself, and I'll never live it down".

As an outside observer, we know that an alternative, more rational thought might be "My speech might only be OK, but if I do mess up, everyone will forget about it soon enough."

Using your "worst outcome" and "likely outcome" from above, describe your:

Irrational thought:

Rational thought:

STOPP and think...

When you find yourself feeling anxious, take a minute to stop and think.

Stop: Just pause for a moment.

Take a breath: Notice your breathing as you breathe in and out. In through the nose and out through the mouth

Observe: What thoughts are going through your mind right now? Where is your focus of attention? What are you reacting to? What sensations do you notice in your body?

Pull back – put in some perspective: Don't believe in everything you think. What is the bigger picture? Take the helicopter view. What is another way of looking at this situation? What advice would you give a friend? What would a trusted friend say to you right now? Is this thought a fact or opinion? What is a more reasonable explanation? How important is this? How important will it be in 6 months? It will pass.

Practice what works and proceed: What is the best thing to do right now? What is the most helpful thing for me, for others, for the situation? What can I do that fits in with my values? Where can I focus my attention right now? Do what will be effective and appropriate.

Improve your overall wellbeing

Be kind to yourself

Our culture, genes, religion, upbringing, education, gender, sexuality, beliefs, and life experiences make us who we are. We all have bad days. Be kind to yourself. Encourage rather than criticise yourself. Treat yourself the way you would treat a friend in the same situation.



Exercise regularly

Being active helps lift our mood, reduces stress and anxiety, improves physical health, and gives us more energy. Get outside, preferably in a green space or near water. Find an activity you enjoy doing and just do it.



Take up a hobby and/or learn a new skill

Increase your confidence and interest, meet others, or prepare for finding work.



Have some fun and/or be creative

Having fun or being creative helps us feel better and can increase our confidence. Enjoy yourself.



Help others


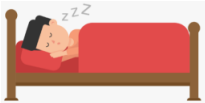




Get involved with a community project, charity work, or simply help out someone you know. As well as benefiting others, you'll be doing something worthwhile which will help you feel better about yourself.



Relax

Make time for yourself. Allow yourself to chill out and relax. Find something that suits you – different things work for different people. Breathe... (imagine a balloon in your belly, inflating and deflating as you breathe in and out)



<p>Eat healthily</p> <p>Eat regularly, eat breakfast, eat healthily, eat fruit and vegetables, and drink water.</p>	
<p>Balance sleep</p> <p>Get into a healthy sleep routine including going to bed and getting up at the same time each day.</p>	
<p>Connect with others</p> <p>Stay in touch with family and friends - make regular and frequent contact with them.</p>	
<p>Beware drink and drugs</p> <p>Avoid using alcohol (or non-prescribed drugs) to help you cope – it will only add to your problems.</p>	
<p>See the bigger picture</p> <p>We all give different meanings to situations and see things from our point of view. Broaden out your perspective and consider the bigger picture ('the helicopter view'). What meaning am I giving this? Is this fact or opinion? How would others see it? Is there another way of looking at this? How important is it, or will it be in a year's time? What can I do right now that will help most?</p>	
<p>Accepting: "It is as it is"</p> <p>We tend to fight against distressing thoughts and feelings, but we can learn to just notice them and give up that struggle. Some situations we just can't change. We can surf those waves rather than try to stop them. Allow those thoughts and sensations just to be – they will pass.</p>	

Set yourself some goals...

Be kind to yourself	Where am I now on a scale of 1-10?
	What could I do to move up one point on the scale?
Exercise regularly	Where am I now on a scale of 1-10?
	What could I do to move up one point on the scale?
Take up a hobby and/or learn a new skill	Where am I now on a scale of 1-10?
	What could I do to move up one point on the scale?
Have some fun and/or be creative	Where am I now on a scale of 1-10?
	What could I do to move up one point on the scale?
Help others	Where am I now on a scale of 1-10?
	What could I do to move up one point on the scale?
Relax	Where am I now on a scale of 1-10?
	What could I do to move up one point on the scale?

Eat healthily	Where am I now on a scale of 1-10?
	What could I do to move up one point on the scale?
Balance sleep	Where am I now on a scale of 1-10?
	What could I do to move up one point on the scale?
Connect with others	Where am I now on a scale of 1-10?
	What could I do to move up one point on the scale?
Beware drink and drugs	Where am I now on a scale of 1-10?
	What could I do to move up one point on the scale?
See the bigger picture	Where am I now on a scale of 1-10?
	What could I do to move up one point on the scale?
Accepting: “It is as it is”	Where am I now on a scale of 1-10?
	What could I do to move up one point on the scale?

Deep breathing

Deep breathing is a simple technique that's excellent for managing emotions. Not only is deep breathing effective, it's also discreet and easy to use at any time or place.

Practicing deep breathing

1. Sit comfortably and place one hand on your abdomen
2. Breathe in through your nose, deeply enough that the hand on your abdomen rises
3. Hold the air in your lungs
4. And then exhale slowly through your mouth, with your lips puckered as if you are blowing through a straw.

Tips

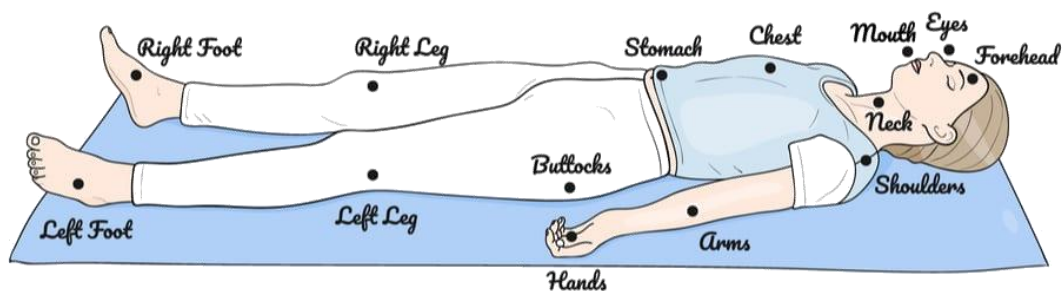
The secret is to go slow. Time the inhalation (4 seconds), pause (4 seconds), and exhalation (6 seconds). Practice for 3 to 5 minutes.



Progressive muscle relaxation

How often have you thought, “If only I could relax, I would be able to sleep”? One way of achieving this is progressive muscle relaxation.

Progressive muscle relaxation is based on the tensing and relaxing of the main muscle groups of the body. This leads to a decrease in muscle activity, heart rate, and blood pressure.



Practicing progressive muscle relaxation

Sit back or lie down in a comfortable position. For each area of the body listed below, tense your muscles tightly, but not to the point of strain. Hold the tension for 10 seconds and pay close attention to how it feels. Then, release the tension and notice how the feeling of relaxation differs from the feeling of tension.

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| Feet | Curl your toes tightly into your feet then release them. |
| Calves | Point or flex your feet then let them relax. |
| Thighs | Squeeze your thighs together tightly then let them relax. |
| Torso | Suck in your abdomen then release the tension and let it fall. |
| Back | Squeeze your shoulder blades together then release them. |

- Shoulders** Lift and squeeze your shoulders toward your ears, then let them drop.
- Arms** Make fists and squeeze them toward your shoulders, then let them drop.
- Hands** Make a fist by curling your fingers into your palm then relax your fingers.
- Face** Scrunch your facial features to the centre of your face then relax.
- Full body** Squeeze all muscles together then release all tension.

Tips

- You should use your progressive muscle relaxation technique as often as you like but it would be ideal to do it before bed. This will help you unwind before bedtime.
- You should make sure you feel the tension but never tense your muscles to the extent that you feel pain.

Guided imagery



Another relaxation technique, known as guided imagery, can help you to switch off racing thoughts at bedtime by creating your own imagery story. This technique is particularly helpful if you find it difficult to switch off your thoughts when you are trying to sleep. It involves visualising a relaxing scene or place that is safe, familiar and easy to recall. Imagery works best if engaged through a multi-sensory perspective focusing on senses such as smell, taste, and touch.

Practicing guided imagery

Think of a place that you find comforting. It could be a secluded beach, your bedroom, a quiet mountaintop, or even a loud concert. For 5 to 10 minutes, use all your senses to imagine this setting in great detail. Don't just think fleetingly about this place- really imagine it.



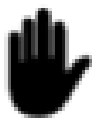
What do you see around you? What do you notice in the distance? Look all around to take in all your surroundings. Look for small details you would usually miss.



What sounds can you hear? Are they soft or loud? Listen closely to everything around you. Keep listening to see if you notice any distant sounds.



What is the flavour like? Are you eating or drinking something enjoyable? How does it taste? Savour all the tastes of the food or drink.



What can you feel? What is the temperature like? Think of how the air feels on your skin, and how your clothes feel on your body. Soak in all these sensations.



What scents are present? Are they strong or faint? What does the air smell like? Take some time to appreciate the scents.

Tips






- Preparing your story in advance will make it easier to practice guided imagery
- Practice guided imagery before your bedtime
- It takes practice to get used to guided imagery. Don't give up if you didn't get it at your first try.

An experiment

Prepare a unique and individual story that you can use for your guided imagery

Start with your location and its description then gradually add sensory detail...

Useful apps and websites

	<p>Be Mindful (£30.00)</p> <p>Be Mindful is an online course for reducing stress, depression and anxiety. It guides you through elements of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT). Mindfulness involves paying attention to our thoughts and feelings in a way that increases our ability to manage difficult situations.</p>
	<p>Beat Panic (£0.99)</p> <p>Beat Panic is designed to guide people through a panic attack or raised anxiety using their phone. The app uses a series of soothing flashcards with messages designed to help you overcome a panic attack.</p>
	<p>Big White Wall (Free)</p> <p>Big White Wall is an online community for people who are stressed, anxious or experiencing low mood. You can express your feelings by creating a Brick using words, pictures and images. You can talk anonymously to other members and take part in group or one-to-one therapy with therapists.</p>
	<p>Catch It (Free)</p> <p>The Catch It app helps you learn how to manage feelings like anxiety, depression, and anger using a Cognitive Behavioural Therapy approach. The app encourages you to record your mood, look at problems in a different way, challenge negative thoughts and improve your mental wellbeing.</p>
	<p>Chill Panda (Free)</p> <p>Chill Panda measures your heart rate, tracks your mood, and suggests tasks such as breathing techniques and light exercises to take your mind off your worries.</p>

**My Possible Self (Free, with optional in-app purchases)**

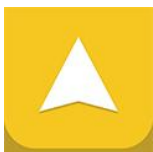
My Possible Self allows you to take control of your thoughts, feelings and behaviour. Modules are available to manage fear, anxiety, stress, and unhelpful thinking.

**SilverCloud (Free)**

SilverCloud is an online course to help you manage stress, anxiety and depression based on a Cognitive Behavioural Therapy approach. You work through a series of topics selected by a therapist to address specific needs. The eight-week course is designed to be completed in your own time and at your own pace.

**Sleepio (Free)**



Sleepio is an online sleep improvement programme, clinically proven to help you fall asleep faster, stay asleep through the night, and give you more energy during the day. The programme is based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. You will learn cognitive techniques to help tackle the racing mind and behavioural strategies to help reset sleeping patterns naturally.

**Stress & Anxiety Companion (Free, with in app purchases)**

Stress & Anxiety Companion helps you handle stress and anxiety on-the-go using Cognitive Behavioural Therapy techniques. Using breathing exercises, relaxing music and games designed to calm the mind, the app helps you change negative thoughts to help you cope with life's ups and downs

**Thrive (Free)**

Thrive helps you prevent and manage stress, anxiety, and related conditions. The game based app can be used to relax before stressful situations or on a more regular basis to help you live a less stressful life.

<p>NHS Inform www.nhsinform.scot</p>	<p>NHS Inform is an online resource which provides self-help guides for difficulties such as stress, anxiety, depression, panic, or sleep problems.</p>
<p>Living Life to the Full www.llttf.com</p> 	<p>Living Life to the Full is a website designed to help those suffering from low mood and stress and other related difficulties they cause. The website offers self-help courses written by a psychiatrist from a cognitive behavioural perspective.</p>
<p>Steps for Stress www.stepsforstress.org</p> 	<p><i>Steps for Stress</i> is a website which provides you with five easy steps to help you manage your stress and start feeling better</p> <p>Step 1 is <i>Recognising Stress</i></p> <p>Step 2 is <i>Getting Ready</i></p> <p>Step 3 is <i>Coping Better</i></p> <p>Step 4 is <i>Dealing with the Past</i></p> <p>Step 5 is <i>Take Action Now</i></p>

This booklet was created for the West Lothian Community Wellbeing Hubs, it is an adaption of the below resources:

- **Clinical Centre for Interventions, Unhelpful Thinking Styles:**
www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/-/media/CCI/Mental-Health-Professionals/Depression/Depression---Information-Sheets/Depression-Information-Sheet---11--Unhelpful-Thinking-Styles.pdf
- **NHS Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, Anxiety, An NHS Self Help Guide:** <https://web.ntw.nhs.uk/selfhelp/leaflets/Anxiety.pdf>
- **Therapist Aid – Coping Skills for Anxiety:**
www.therapistaid.com/therapy-worksheet/coping-skills-anxiety
- **Get Self Help – Positive Steps Towards Wellbeing:**
www.getselfhelp.co.uk/docs/Steps%20to%20Wellbeing.pdf
- **Get Self Help – Anxiety:**
www.getselfhelp.co.uk/docs/AnxietySelfHelp.pdf
- **Get Self Help – STOPP:**
www.getselfhelp.co.uk//stopp.htm



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Council



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