

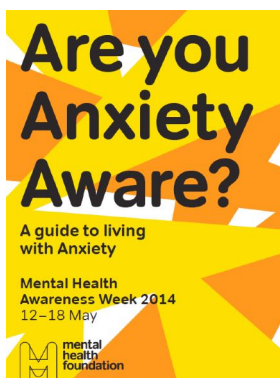


# An Easy Read guide to **ANXIETY**



**Mental Health  
Awareness Week 2014**





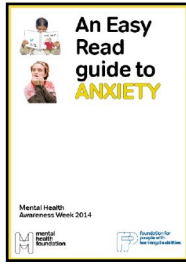
This guide is an Easy Read summary of the "Are you Anxiety Aware?" guide (2014).



This guide was written by the Mental Health Foundation.



To see this report in full please visit our website:  
**[www.mentalhealth.org.uk](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk)**



# What this booklet is about



Everyone feels anxious at some point in their life.



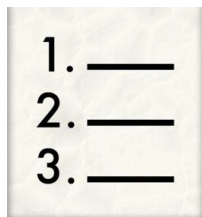
Things like going for a job interview, meeting a partner's family for the first time or bringing up a child can make us feel anxious.



It is normal to feel anxious about these things. Sometimes feeling a bit anxious can be a good thing.



However, if you feel anxious too much it can lead to more serious **MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS**.



This booklet looks at:

- what is anxiety
- how it makes us feel; and
- what to do when we start to feel too anxious.



Words in **CAPITAL LETTERS** and **ORANGE** are explained at the back of this summary,



# What is anxiety?



Anxiety is a type of fear. Anyone can get this in their lives.



We can feel anxious if we think about a specific thing that may happen to us, for example being scared of going to the dentist.



We can also feel anxious if we think about general things going wrong now or in the future.



It is different to fear. Fear is what we feel when we are in real danger right now.



Sometimes we may not know why we feel anxious.



Most people can get through times of feeling anxious by themselves and these feelings go away.



But anxiety can sometimes last much longer and can take over people's lives.



It can stop us doing the things we would like to be able to do.



It can damage our relationships with our family and friends.



Around 1 in 6 people in the UK can have **MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEM** like anxiety each year.



Many people do not ask for help about their anxious feelings.





1. \_\_\_\_\_  
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
3. \_\_\_\_\_

# Here are some types of anxiety that people can feel:



**1. Agoraphobia** is usually a fear of being away from a space you feel safe in.

People who have agoraphobia often feel a lot of panic if they are somewhere they cannot easily get away from.

**Example:** Feeling worried about what might happen in a big place like a shopping centre.



**2. Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD)** is the most common type of anxiety and usually affects young adults.

People with GAD find it hard to control their anxious feelings and it changes how they can live their lives.

**Example:** Feeling anxious about talking to new people.

**3. Panic** is how we feel when we are very scared or stressed and cannot control these feelings.

When we feel panic we may feel physical things like a pounding heart, faint, sweating and shaky limbs.

**Example:** Getting on public transport like a train when it is really busy and it making you feel really worried and scared.



**4. A phobia** is a very strong fear of a thing or place. It is usually something that you don't need to be afraid of.

A phobia can make people feel panic and they can change their life to avoid what they are afraid of.

**Example:** Being afraid of heights and not being able to walk across a bridge because you are scared of falling.



## 5. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

can happen if someone has seen something really bad or something really bad has happened to them.

People can have flashbacks, panic attacks, nightmares or want to avoid things that might remind them of the event.

**Example:** Soldiers who go to war can get PTSD because they have seen some really horrible things.



## 6. Obsessive Compulsive Disorders (OCD)

are when people have lots of thoughts about a certain thing all the time.

They find it hard to stop these thoughts. They may feel like they need to do some things again and again try to feel better.

**Example:** Feeling like you have to wash your hands all the time because you are afraid of germs.





# What makes us feel anxious?



How anxious we feel depends on lots of things.



For example:

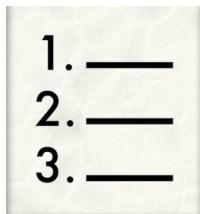
- what our families are like
- how we were brought up
- what's happened to us in our lives
- the way we have learnt to cope with things



Knowing what makes you anxious and what can help you cope with these feelings.



We did a survey\* to find out what makes people anxious.



We found out that:



- **Money issues**

45% of people said that money caused them to feel anxious.





- **Work**

17% of people said the fear of losing their job or unemployment made them feel anxious.



Also work issues, for example working long hours, made 27% of people anxious.



- **People we care about**

26% of people said that family and relationships made them feel anxious.



- **Ageing**

36% of people aged over 55 years felt anxious about growing older.



- **Loneliness**

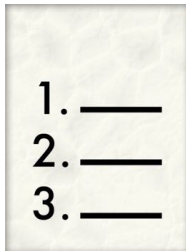
28% of young people said that loneliness made them feel anxious. This is two times more than those who were aged over 55.



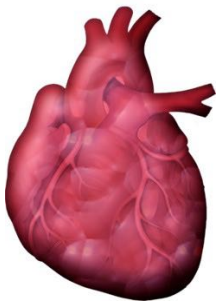
# What are the signs of anxiety and how do you spot them?



Anxiety has a strong effect on us because it can take over how we think in our minds and feel in our bodies.



These are some of the things that might happen when we feel anxious:



Rapid and / or changing heartbeat



Fast breathing



Churning stomach / diarrhoea



Have trouble sleeping



Feel moody



Feel sad or very low



These feelings aren't always helpful to us and we may want to know how to control them.



We can learn to feel less worried and to cope with our anxiety so it doesn't stop us from getting on with our lives.



# How to cope when we are feeling anxious



These are things we can do to help us feel better:



## 1. Talking it through

It can be hard to talk about our feelings. But it can be helpful to talk to friends, family or someone who has had the same feelings as us.



## 2. Facing the things that make us anxious

Often our fear of something is worse than what it is really like. When we face our fears and find out they aren't so scary it can help us feel less anxious in future.



## 3. Know yourself

Write about what makes us anxious. This will help us to understand how we feel.



## 4. Relax

Things like yoga, meditation or massage relax your breathing and help us feel more calm so we can deal with anxious feelings.



## 5. Exercise

Exercise can make us feel better. It can make us feel happier and is a good way of stopping us feeling anxious in the first place.



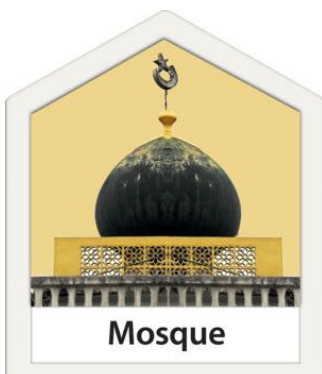
## 6. Healthy eating

Eating lots of fruit and vegetables and avoiding too much sugar can help. Things like coffee and sugar can make us feel like we have lots of energy. But when this runs out we feel very low.



## 7. Avoid alcohol or drink healthy amounts

Some people drink alcohol when they feel nervous to forget their feelings. But this only lasts for a while. When it wears off we can feel worse, and be less ready to deal with these feelings when they come back.



## 8. Faith / spirituality

Religious or spiritual beliefs can help us feel connected to something bigger than ourselves. This can help us to feel calm and relaxed.





# How to get help



We can ask for help if we feel anxious all the time, or if it feels like our anxiety is taking over our life.



It may be hard to talk about our feelings but asking for help is a good thing.



The first thing to do is talk to your doctor. He will be able to tell you about the things that can help you.



There are many different things we could do to help with anxious feelings:



**1. Talking about how you feel to a counsellor**  
Things like **COUNSELLING** are very good at helping people with anxiety problems.



## 2. Being more aware of your thoughts (mindfulness)

**MINDFULNESS** looks at changing how we think about things and ourselves. It looks at what is happening now and not worrying about the past or the future.

You can do a course to learn how to be Mindful.



## 3. Meditation

Meditation can help people think more carefully about their thoughts and to feel more calm.



## 4. Taking medicine

Taking medicines can help us to cope with anxious feelings for a short time. It cannot stop anxious feelings by itself. Medicines are most useful when used with other things like counselling.



## 5. Joining a support group

Local support or self-help groups bring together people with the same feelings as you to share stories, tips and try out new ways of feeling better.

Your doctor, library or local Citizens Advice Bureau will have details of support groups near you.

# What these words mean

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## Counselling/ Counsellor

A counsellor talks to us about how we feel and what is wrong and tries to help you think about what you can do to feel better.

A counsellor is the person you talk to.



## Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy is a type of counselling.

It looks at what we want to change about ourselves.

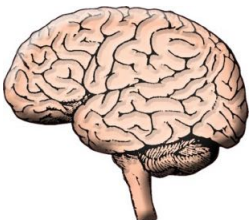
We talk about how we can make these changes and think differently about our problems.



## Mindfulness

Mindfulness looks at changing how we think about things and ourselves.

It looks at what is happening now not worrying about the past or the future.



## Mental Health/ mental health issues

Mental health or mental health issues are about how our minds are working.

Our minds are part of our brain, in our head. It's the part where we think and feel.

Our minds are really important to keep us healthy. In the same way our bodies can be physically unwell, our minds can become unwell too.



## Mentally healthy

Being mentally healthy is about thinking about how we are feeling and looking after our mental health.

If we are mentally healthy we will be feeling good and making good choices for ourselves.



## Psychologist

Psychologists are like counsellors. It's a job people train for. They can help us to think about the things we do and how we can feel better. They talk to us about what we are feeling. This can be called 'talking therapy'. They have to do more training than counsellors to become psychologists.



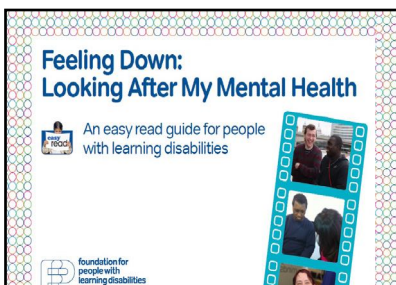
# Useful resources



The Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities is part of the Mental Health Foundation.



The Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities have written some information around keeping mentally healthy.

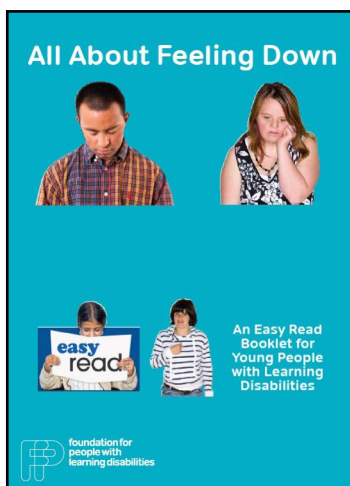


## Feeling Down: Looking after my mental health

This is an Easy Read guide about how to keep yourself feeling mentally well. There are sheets for you to fill in about your mental health and information for visiting your doctor.

You can download it for free or buy it from our website:

[www.learningdisabilities.org.uk/mentalhealth](http://www.learningdisabilities.org.uk/mentalhealth)



## All About Feeling Down

This is a guide for young people to help them think about their mental health. You can download it from our website:

[www.learningdisabilities.org.uk](http://www.learningdisabilities.org.uk)





# Other useful places to get help

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**Mental Health Foundation**  
mentalhealth.org.uk

**Anxiety UK**  
anxietyuk.org.uk  
08444 775 774

**Anxiety Care**  
anxietycare.org.uk  
020 8478 3400

**Be Mindful**  
Online course in Mindfulness therapy  
bemindful.co.uk

**British Association for Behavioural  
and Cognitive Psychotherapies  
(BABCP)**  
babcp.com  
01617054304

**NHS Choices**  
nhs.uk

**Samaritans**  
samaritans.org.uk  
jo@samaritans.org  
08457 90 90 90

**The British Association  
of Counselling &  
Psychotherapy**  
bacp.org.uk  
01455 883300

**The British Psychological  
Society**  
bps.org.uk  
01162549568

**UK Council for  
Psychotherapy**  
psychotherapy.org.uk  
020 7014 9955



## **Mental Health Foundation**

**Colechurch House  
1 London Bridge Walk  
London SE1 2SX  
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**Telephone  
020 7803 1101**

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info@mentalhealth.org.uk  
Website  
www.mentalhealth.org.uk**

Including the  
 foundation for  
people with  
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