

Top approaches for managing anxiety

- 1. Meditate** – the benefits of meditation are well established in producing a more reflective, more thoughtful and less anxious personality. Mindfulness practices whether in meditation or otherwise can also assist as these allow you to separate yourself out from your anxiety;
- 2. Recognise you are not your anxiety** – anxiety is a physiological response and to a certain extent a primal one. It is our reaction to something in our world rather than it is us. We need to separate ourselves out;
- 3. Anxiety may not have a reason.** The causes of anxiety may be so deep and convoluted that they are not almost always apparent. Sometimes we find theories that account for the way we feel that may not be the truth. Cognitive behaviourists call this “emotional reasoning”. Sometimes one may be anxious simply because of a physiological state of readiness and alertness that one has made habitual;
- 4. Calm the physiology** – there is no doubt that slow deep abdominal breathing is a major way of reducing anxiety. It reduces the amount of energy your system generates by reducing your oxygen supply and even has benefits in terms of how you access the nervous system. Regular slow deep breathing exercises can make a great difference in anxiety;
- 5. Talk about your concerns.** You don't have to see a counsellor or coach to actually be able to share a difficulty. The danger lies in always bottling feeling. They say “a problem shared is a problem halved”. The truth is the process is closer to the fact that as you put things into words, you organise your thoughts, you become more reflective instead of things running round in a meaningless never ending self-defeating circuit;

6. Future pace. Consider your worries and anxieties in terms of what will happen in 2 years' time, 5 years' time or even 100 years' time. Taking our mind to future events or more particularly beyond anticipated events that we are viewing negatively, can make a big difference in re-framing our expectations of the experiences ahead. Whatever difficulties, embarrassments or challenges are about to occur or are occurring, they may not amount to a hill of beans in a very short time. It is important we hold this in mind;

7. Use self-help materials. Self-help materials have a mixed response in terms of whether they assist or not and research is divided on this. Guided fantasy, guided relaxation, self-hypnosis and other types of input, can be very productive self-help materials that assist you in calming your state. Cognitive behavioural materials that allow you to keep journals etc. can be of some assistance but these are best used advisedly and with some professional support;

8. Seek medical advice. Sometimes physiological states are so rampant that we need some assistance from the medical profession. This may mean a course of tranquilliser type substances or perhaps an imaginative approach in the short term to restoring sleep. Many people are against medication and this needs to be respected. Sometimes however things can be so bad that there comes a time when this help is inevitable. The importance is being open to that possibility whilst not depending upon it;

9. Hydration. Many people neglect their overall body's physiology by dehydration. This affects the body's ability to remove toxins and can even form its own form of primal anxiety during sleep creating as much waking as anxiety itself. A significant number of people in our community are dehydrated and this does not benefit their cognitive abilities, their ability to withstand stress and their ability to problem solve;

10. Establish a sleep pattern (See our suggestion paper on Sleep). It doesn't matter what challenges we face, if we get our rest out and at least have a period of a number of hours whereby the body can reset we are in a better position. So look to your sleep pattern. Avoid stimulants and prolonged exercise before sleep, ensure closure on issues that may be troubling you before sleep and reconcile any differences that may exist in your household. For a fuller guide see our 10 top tips for a great night's sleep also on site.