

Section 1 - Introduction to Anxiety

What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a term used to describe uncomfortable feelings of nervousness, worry, and tension, which we all feel from time to time. Anxiety can affect anyone, whatever their age, gender etc. It affects our thoughts, physical reactions, moods and behaviours. Anxiety can also cause us to feel panicky and frightened and prevent us from doing things. Too much stress in our lives can result in higher levels of anxiety.

Anxiety is also a perfectly normal response to threat, and in some situations that are really threatening it can be helpful in preparing us for action. Some degree of anxiety can improve our performance in certain situations such as job interviews, taking exams, sporting events, or even helping us to pay our bills on time. However, if anxiety occurs too often and for no apparent reason, or if it begins to interfere with our life, then it has become a problem.

We know from research that at any one time, there are many people experiencing anxiety that is a problem to them. Anxiety can either be very general; affecting many areas of our lives, or it may be more specific to certain situations such as crowded places, talking to people or travelling on buses. It could even occur as a specific phobia such as a fear of lifts or a fear of spiders.

How does anxiety affect us?

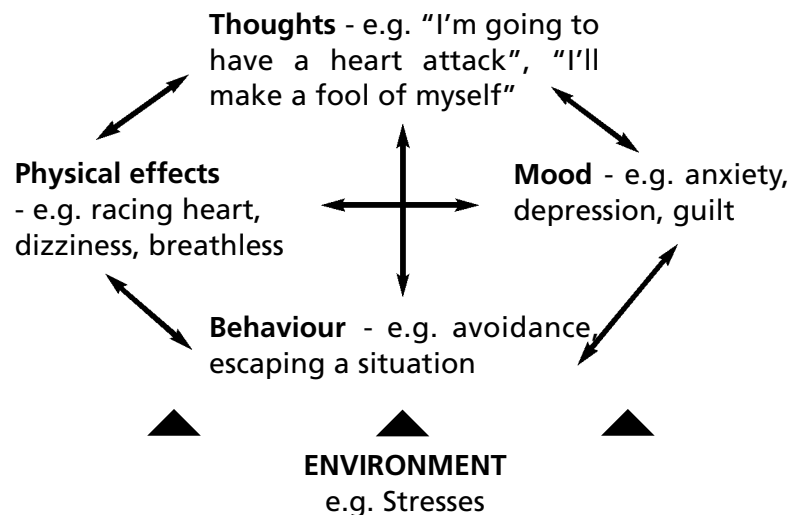
Anxiety affects us in four main ways:

1. **Physical effects** – when we are anxious we will feel many physical symptoms of anxiety, such as a pounding heart, a churning stomach, or breathing difficulties. Long-term stress also affects us physically.
2. **Thoughts** – when we are anxious we tend to worry and have negative thoughts like “What if I make a fool of myself”, or “What if I suffocate / faint /have a heart attack”. As well as thoughts, we may experience images or pictures in our mind such as an image of a car crash or someone criticising us.
3. **Mood** – anxiety itself is a type of mood. Anxiety and prolonged stress can also affect our moods in other ways. For example, if we experience anxiety that restricts our lives over a long period of time, we may feel guilty, down and depressed.
4. **Behaviour** - anxiety also affects our behaviour, changing the things we feel able to do. This can result in avoidance of many things, such as going into a supermarket or going to the dentist. When we can't avoid things we may do things to make us feel safe, such as always having someone with us, or carrying tablets that we don't really need.

We will look at how to deal with problems in these four areas in the following sections. Although we look at these areas in separate sections, it is important to realise that they affect one another. For example, our thoughts about something affects our feelings and our feelings affect us physically. This is an important part of understanding anxiety and we will say a lot more about this throughout the pack.

The diagram below shows how these four areas (**thoughts, mood, behaviour, physical**) all link together and affect each other. It shows how every aspect of a person's life influences all the others. For example, changes in our thoughts influence our physical reactions which influences our mood and behaviour. It also shows that the **environment** (stresses, stressful situations) can cause anxiety and problems in these four areas.

The next section describes various ways in which anxiety can develop.



Adapted from Greenberger, D., and Padesky, C.A., 1995. *Mind Over Mood*. London: The Guilford Press.

How does anxiety develop into a problem?

There are many different reasons why anxiety develops into a problem, and these vary from person to person. Examples of common reasons leading to increased anxiety are included below – you may be able to think of additional ones.

Increased anxiety can develop:

- after a long or intense period of stress and worry.
- as a result of unpleasant or stressful life events. These may include, the death of a loved one, serious illness (yours or someone close to you), the break up of a relationship, or losing or changing jobs.
- the experiences we have had in our lives and how we have learned to cope with them will influence which situations we find stressful and how we deal with them now.
- following a sequence of unhelpful/negative thinking, such as "I can't do this" "I'm going to faint".
- when you lack confidence and self esteem.
- after being involved in an incident that we experience as threatening. This may result in us feeling anxious the next time we are in similar circumstances. For example following a car accident, you may feel anxious driving.
- following a bout of depression where you lose confidence, though you can be anxious and depressed at the same time.

Coping Styles

Some people may feel that they have never coped very well with stress and may describe themselves as a 'born worrier'. They may have experienced anxiety problems for a long time and in a variety of situations, although some situations may cause more anxiety than others.

For other people, there may seem to be no obvious event linked with their recent increase in anxiety. These people may feel that their anxiety has come out of the blue. On closer inspection however, anxiety may result from a gradual build up of pressure related to minor events and life stresses.

Some people have always coped well, and anxiety may have only recently developed into a problem. This may have followed a difficult and stressful time in their life. For these people, anxiety can seem a very big problem because they had always seen themselves as strong and able to cope with things. It may be the first time they have really struggled to cope. All these coping styles are common and can be worked on.

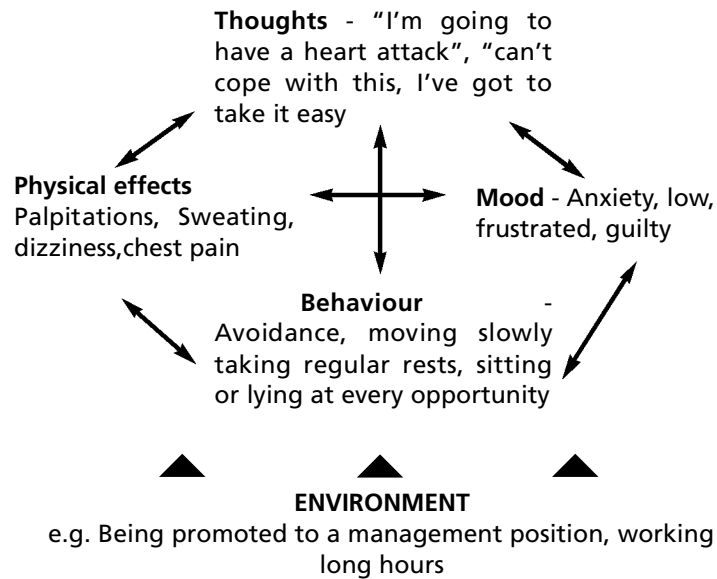
Here is an example of the type of anxiety problem that has followed a stressful time in their life:

Bob, aged 53, no previous history of anxiety problems. Happily married with a teenage daughter. He has recently been promoted to a management position in the car industry, which has put him under a lot of stress due to his long hours. He had always felt he was good at coping with work and was a hard worker. Two months ago Bob noticed he was having palpitations and dizziness as he rushed from one meeting to another. He began worrying he had a serious physical problem which put more stress on him. Despite the fact that his GP confirmed that Bob was physically fit, he still suffered from the following symptoms:

- Physical:** palpitations, sweating, dizziness, and chest pains.
- Thinking:** "I'm going to have a heart attack" "I can't cope with this, I've got to take it easy."
- Behaviour:** avoiding strenuous activity, making excuses at work not to attend meetings he feels may cause him stress, moving slowly, taking regular rests and sitting or lying down, ensuring he always has his mobile and his car nearby (so he can get help easily).
- Mood:** anxiety, low, and frustrated. Begins to feel guilty that he is not doing his job well enough.



The diagram below shows how Bob's thinking, behaviours, moods and physical reactions all affect each other.

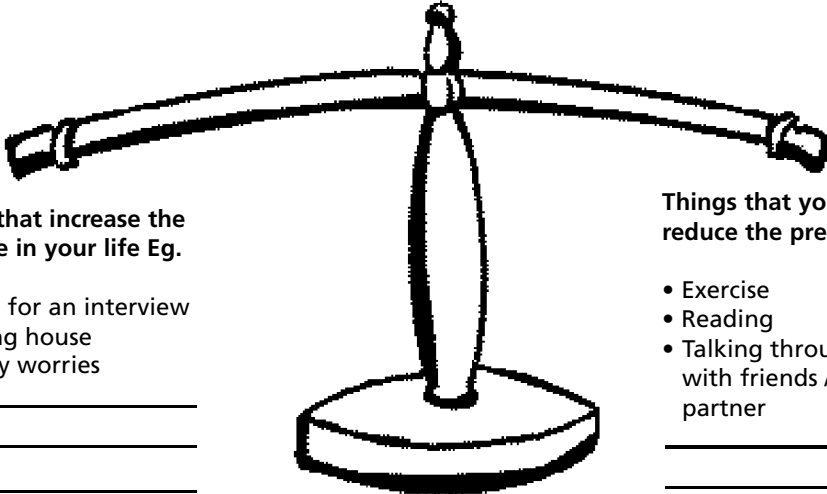


How do I get an even balance between pressure and activities that reduce pressure?

Anxiety levels can increase when our perceived ability to cope is outweighed by the pressures placed upon us. It is important to maintain a healthy balance between pressure and activities that reduce pressure. The build up of pressure can be due to any number of things. The impact of events will vary from person to person.

Some things you may have identified as pressures in your life could be more difficult to change, for example, low income, poor housing. However, working through this exercise may help you come up with activities that might ease some of these pressures and thereby reducing some of your anxieties. We all have our own methods of coping with life's pressures, some more healthy than others.

Use the space below to write down the things that may increase the pressure in your life and the things that you do to reduce the pressure.

<p>Things that increase the pressure in your life Eg.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Going for an interview • Moving house • Money worries <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>		<p>Things that you do to reduce the pressure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise • Reading • Talking through problems with friends / family / partner <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
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Take a closer look at your responses in the above boxes and ask yourself the questions below.

1. Do you have an even balance of pressures and activities that reduce pressure?

2. If not, what could you do to even out the balance?

If possible, try to make any changes necessary to even out the balance between pressures and activities that reduce pressure.

Why does anxiety persist?

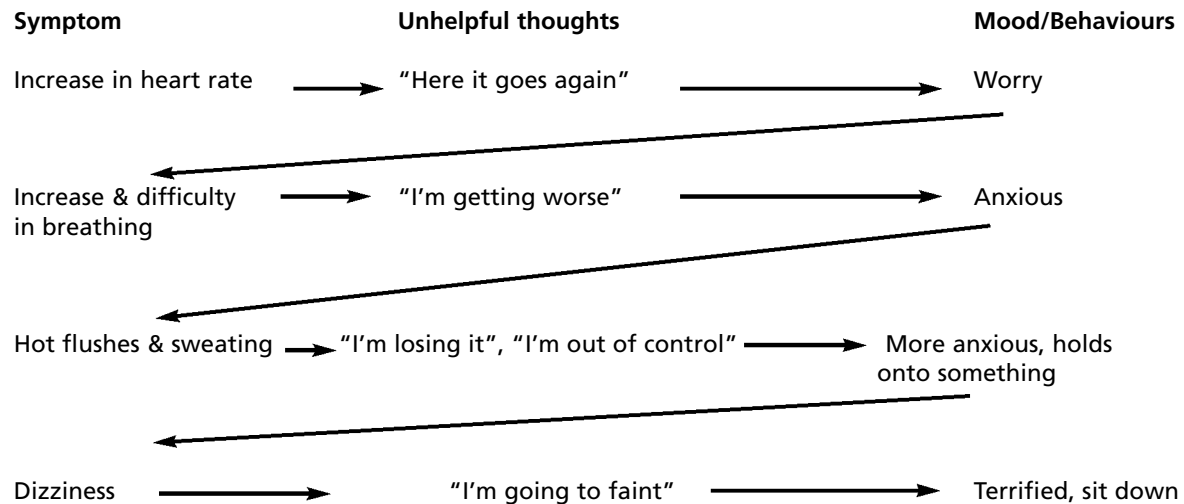
Although anxiety itself is a normal response to threat, there are a number of ways in which it can become a long-term problem. Again, these differ from person to person. Below are some examples of how anxiety is fuelled and can leak into other areas of our lives.

1. Fear of Fear

Anxiety can develop into a cycle involving physical symptoms, unhelpful thoughts, moods and behaviours, that is hard to break. When in an anxiety provoking situation you become more aware of the physical symptoms of anxiety that you experience. You then have unhelpful thoughts about these symptoms that change your mood resulting in increased worrying. For example, if your heart is racing, you may fear that you are about to have a heart attack. This worrying will actually make the physical symptoms worse, which is likely to make you have more unhelpful thoughts making you worry more, and so the cycle continues. Sometimes this cycle can even lead to a panic attack (see page 2.4).

The fear of fear diagram below gives an example of how symptoms, thoughts, moods and behaviours interact in a cycle of increasing anxiety. Your own anxiety may involve different physical symptoms, thoughts, moods and behaviours. By working through this pack you will increase your understanding of what these are for you and how you can break this cycle.

Fear of fear diagram



This pattern can happen very quickly. It may be difficult to pinpoint anxious thoughts, which as we become more anxious tend to become more unhelpful. By recognising our anxious thoughts, we can then work on challenging them. This will help to break the cycle (sections 3 and 4 look at this in more detail).

2. Anxiety can become a habit.

Once we become anxious over a long period of time, the feelings of anxiety often remain, even though there may seem to be no present cause for it. This is because it can become a habit to feel tense and to worry and to expect difficulties. It can also become a habit to avoid the things we think will make us anxious. The more we avoid things, the harder it becomes to face them (avoidance will be discussed in more detail on page 5.1). Our bodies can get into the habit of being tense and to reacting anxiously to all kinds of situations. An example of this is when we have a habit of clenching our teeth or breathing in a tense, shallow way.

3. Anticipation

Once you have felt anxious in a situation, you begin to feel anxious before going into similar situations. For example, we may begin to feel anxious before we are about to enter a crowded place. Gradually this increased expectation of anxiety can make you feel anxious before more and more situations, potentially affecting many areas of your life. Our thoughts about entering an anxious situation can lead to feelings of anxiety.

4. Association

Once you have experienced anxiety in a particular situation you associate this feeling with other similar settings. For example, if you have felt anxious on a crowded bus, you then begin to feel anxious on all buses or even all forms of transport. Similarly, if you feel anxious whilst away from home, you begin to feel anxious every time you leave the house.

5. Preoccupation and Hypersensitivity

Once you have suffered from the uncomfortable feelings of panic and worry, you become more aware of the physical symptoms of anxiety. You become preoccupied and hypersensitive to changes such as breathing and heart rate. As a result of the discomfort you feel when anxious, any slight change can be exaggerated causing you to over-react and worry. This in turn makes the symptoms worse. This can be a problem especially for people who are self-conscious about their anxiety and those who worry that their symptoms mean they have a serious physical problem.

Experiencing anxiety over a long period of time, can also lead to changes in **mood and behaviour** such as tiredness, increased irritability, avoidance, and over and under activity (see section 5).

An introduction to panic attacks

Panic is a feeling of intense anxiety or fear over a short period of time. A panic attack is characterised by physical symptoms, such as rapid heartbeat, dizziness, increased body temperature, breathing difficulties or nausea. People who experience panic attacks misinterpret their bodily sensations. Misinterpreting means thinking about their physical sensations in a threatening way. Common examples are misinterpreting rapid heartbeat as a heart attack or disorientation may be misrepresented as going crazy.

The vicious cycle of physical symptoms, thoughts and mood/behaviour interact and escalate very rapidly. You will find more information about panic attacks and how to cope with them in the next section of this pack.

How do I relax?

Lots of people find it very difficult to relax. Sometimes we get into bad habits of feeling tense such as stiffness and tension in the neck and shoulder area or grinding of teeth. Like any other skill, relaxation can be learned, but it does take time and effort each day to practice it.

Incorporated into this pack is a relaxation CD (or tape if requested). The CD contains a visualisation method and has vocals at the beginning and music all the way through. Try it out to see if it suits you.

We suggest that you use it daily, or even two or three times a day, when you feel the need. The visualisation task lasts approximately 13 minutes. The whole CD contains 9 tracks and lasts for a duration of 80 minutes. Although we recommend that you try out the visualisation task, it is entirely up to you whether you choose to listen to the whole CD or not.

To use it, find a quiet room, away from interruptions such as telephones, and explain to those around you that you need some quiet time to do the relaxation. Make yourself comfortable on a supportive chair, or lie on a bed, or on a mat or rug on the floor.

We ask you to monitor your own progress by completing a daily relaxation diary located in section 1 worksheets. Further copies can be found in section 6 worksheets.

Time management

Effective time management can help to reduce anxiety by helping us to be more realistic in what we plan to achieve. It helps to organise our time to suit our own individual needs. Everyone's week is made up of different activities, occupying various amounts of time.



The following exercises might help you to organise your weeks to find the most suitable times for you to work on this pack.

Use the space below to list all the activities that make up an average week for you. It could include activities such as watching television, working, travelling, sleeping, visiting friends/family, shopping etc. You might find it useful to write down how much time you spend on each of these activities.

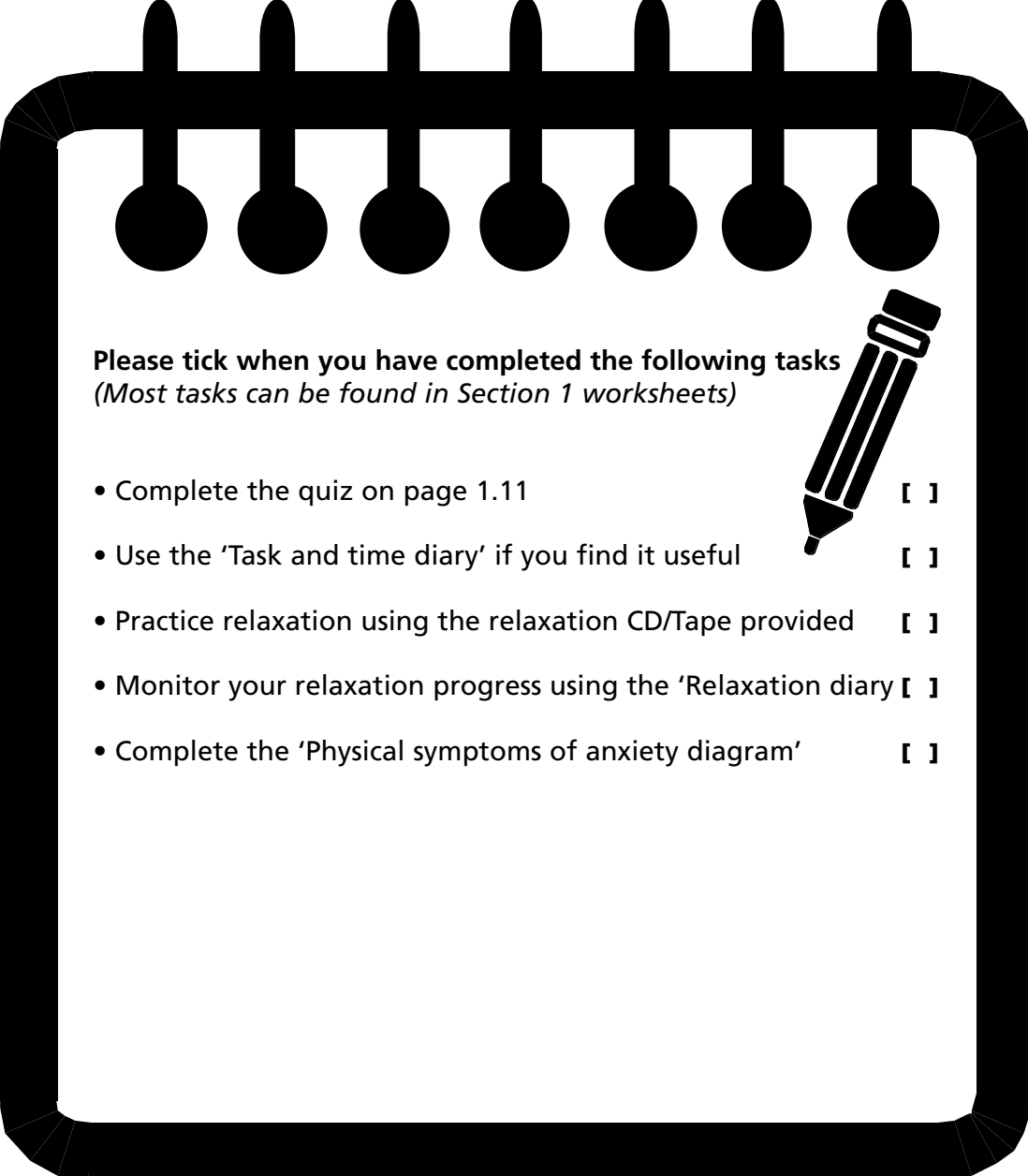
For a lot of people completing this pack will seem like a very daunting task. Effective time management will help you to allocate certain times that you could spend on this pack. Breaking the pack down into more manageable chunks like this can help to make it less daunting.

Now, write down times during a typical week that you could spend working on this self help pack.

Use this in conjunction with the 'Task and time diary' in section 1 worksheets if you find it useful. If you already have an effective way of arranging suitable times to work on this pack, please feel free to continue using that method.

Key Points

- Anxiety is a perfectly normal response to threat
- Excessive anxiety affects us in four main ways - it affects us physically and affects our thoughts, mood and behaviour
- There are many possible causes of anxiety, and these may vary from person to person
- Anxiety levels can increase when our perceived ability to cope is outweighed by the pressures placed upon us
- Anxiety can become a problem through unhelpful patterns of thinking and behaviour such as, fear of fear, anticipation, association, preoccupation and hypersensitivity, and avoidance
- Panic is a feeling of intense anxiety or fear
- Achieving a better balance between pressure and activities that reduce your pressure will reduce your stress and anxiety
- Relaxation is an important skill to learn through practice
- This material will help you to break the cycle and manage your anxiety more appropriately



Please tick when you have completed the following tasks
(Most tasks can be found in Section 1 worksheets)

- Complete the quiz on page 1.11 []
- Use the 'Task and time diary' if you find it useful []
- Practice relaxation using the relaxation CD/Tape provided []
- Monitor your relaxation progress using the 'Relaxation diary' []
- Complete the 'Physical symptoms of anxiety diagram' []

Section 1: Worksheets



Quiz – Introduction to anxiety

The following questions are for you to check your own understanding of the 'introduction to anxiety' section. Remember that this pack is for you to keep, so you can re-read and look back over sections as often as you wish.

1. Anxiety is a perfectly normal response to _____ and can even be helpful because

2. What are the main ways in which anxiety affects us?

- Physical _____
- T _____
- M _____
- B _____

3. Give two examples of how anxiety can develop into a problem

1) _____

2) _____

4. It is important to maintain a healthy balance between p_____ and a_____

5. What are some of the reasons anxiety remains?
- Fear of fear
 - H _____
 - A _____
 - A _____
 - P _____ and H _____

6. What physical symptoms is a panic attack characterised by?

**Answers to Quiz (section 1):
Introduction to anxiety**

1. Threat
It prepares us for action or it can improve our performance in certain situations.
2. Thoughts
Mood
Behaviour
3. Any two of the following:
1) After a long or intense period of stress and worry.
2) As a result of unpleasant or stressful life events.
These may include, the death of a loved one, serious illness (yours or someone close to you), the break up of a relationship, or losing or changing jobs.
3) Following a sequence of unhelpful/negative thinking, such as "I can't do this" "I'm going to faint";
4) When you lack confidence and self esteem.
5) After being involved in an incident that we experience as threatening. This may result in us feeling anxious the next time we are in similar circumstances. For example following a car accident you may feel anxious driving.
6) Following a bout of depression where you lose confidence, though you can be anxious and depressed at the same time.
4. Pressure and activities that reduce pressure
5. Habit
Anticipation
Association
Preoccupation and hypersensitivity
6. Physical symptoms such as rapid heartbeat, dizziness, nausea, increased body temperature, breathing difficulties or

Task and time diary

Instructions

This diary is provided to help you to manage your time more effectively. You can use it to write down the tasks that you need to do, and when and where you intend to complete them. You can also use it to consider any difficulties or problems that may prevent you from completing the tasks, and ways in which you may be able to overcome them.

One aim of this diary is to help you to be more realistic in what you plan to achieve. Sometimes we can feel overwhelmed by the number of things we need to do. This diary can help you to break down the tasks and allocate times to work on them. Planning in this way can help you to space tasks more evenly into your available time and can make you feel more in control. Organising tasks into manageable and achievable chunks can also help you to feel a sense of completion. Likewise, it can ensure that you schedule time for yourself: time for relaxation, and time for reflection.

It may be useful to plan each week with the help of others, for example your partner, parents, or friends. They may be able to help you set yourself realistic aims, and they may also be able to help you to overcome any difficulties you could face, for example, by agreeing to be quiet while you do relaxation.

Remember that this diary can be used in the way that you find most helpful. If you already have an effective way of arranging when or where to complete the tasks in this pack, please feel free to carry on using that method.

Use the example at the top of the time management diary to help you to complete it. If you need more space to write there are some full page versions of the diary in section 6 worksheets.

	What task(s) do I need to do?	When should I do the task(s)?	Where should I do the task(s)?	What (if any) difficulties might arise?	How can I overcome these difficulties?
Example:	Relaxation	7.30 - 8.00pm	Bedroom	Kids might disturb me	Ask partner to look after them
Mon					
Tue					
Wed					
Thur					
Fri					
Sat					
Sun					

Relaxation diary

Instructions

This exercise is designed to help you evaluate how useful relaxation is for you. Before practising relaxation using the CD provided, record today's date and circle the number that best reflects how you feel before relaxation. Then jot down anything that may explain your feelings. After that, practice relaxation using the CD provided. Then, circle the number that best reflects how you feel after relaxation.

EXAMPLE: Relaxation diary

Day	Date	Anxiety level before relaxation		Anxiety level after relaxation	
		Calm	Tense	Calm	Tense
1	01.01.02	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10		0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
Things that explain my feelings:- Busy day at work, woke up late, rushed around					

Day	Date	Anxiety level before relaxation		Anxiety level after relaxation	
		Calm	Tense	Calm	Tense
1		0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10		0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
Things that explain my feelings:-					
2		0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10		0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
Things that explain my feelings:-					
3		0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10		0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
Things that explain my feelings:-					
4		0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10		0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
Things that explain my feelings:-					
5		0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10		0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
Things that explain my feelings:-					
6		0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10		0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
Things that explain my feelings:-					
7		0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10		0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
Things that explain my feelings:-					

Physical symptoms of anxiety diagram

Instructions

Use the diagram below to think about and write down the physical symptoms that **YOU** experience when in situations that you feel anxious in. There are a few symptoms of anxiety listed below to help to start you off. Please tick any of those listed that apply to you and add as many of your own physical symptoms as you can think of.

This exercise should help you to think about and identify the physical symptoms of anxiety that you personally experience.

