



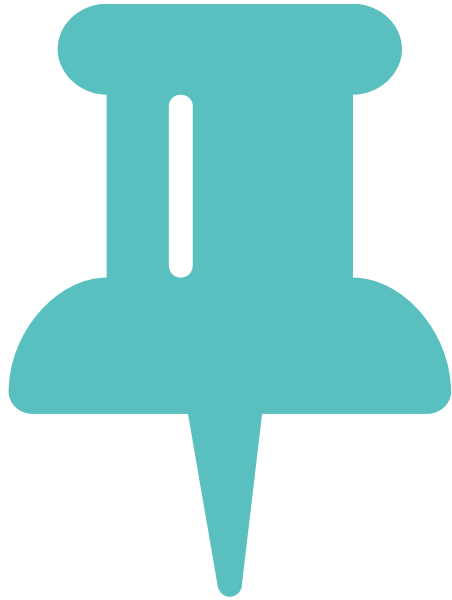
Strategies to Manage Anxiety

The Objectives

- Provide an explanation of worry and anxiety, including physical, cognitive, emotional and behavioral reactions.
- Assert a rationale for the effects and consequences of worry.
- Describe evidenced-based approaches and tools to evaluate and manage worry and anxiety.

Real Questions

- What should I do when I get really anxious about something?
- How can I feel less stressed in my everyday life?
- What lifestyle changes can help improve how I feel?
- How can I stop my mind from going over and over something that has happened in the past?
- How can I stop worrying about everything: my children, partner, friends, work, my “to do” list....



Anxiety Facts

- **FACT 1:** Anxiety is a normal and adaptive system in the body that tells us when we are in danger. This means that dealing with your anxiety NEVER involves eliminating it, but rather managing it.
- **FACT 2:** Anxiety can become a problem when our body tells us that there is danger when there is no real danger. When we think or perceive that we are in danger (even when we aren't), our body reacts as if it really is in danger.
- **FACT 3:** Anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the U.S., affecting 40 million adults in the United States age 18 and older, or **18%** of the population every year.
- **FACT 4:** Anxiety disorders are highly treatable, yet only **37%** of those suffering receive treatment.
- **FACT 5: Anxiety is Treatable**

Two General Types of Worries

Worries about current problems

- *What if I don't have enough money to pay the bills?*
- *What if I don't finish this report on time?*
- *What if my argument with my friend means we won't speak again?*

Worries about hypothetical situations

- *What if the flight I'm taking next month crashes?*
- *What if something happens to someone I love?*
- *What if I get a serious disease when I'm older?*

Control

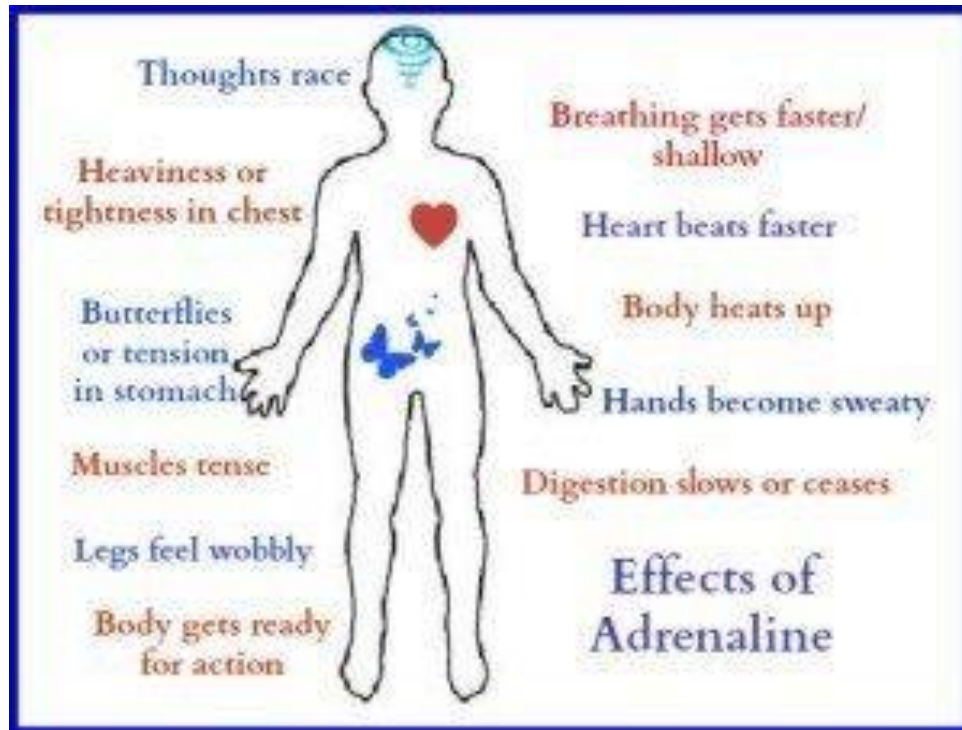
With worries about current problems:

- You have some direct control over the situation.
 - For example, you can manage your finances, work on your report writing, or resolve an argument with a friend.

With worries about hypothetical situations:

- You have almost no control, so there is very little, if anything, that you can do to change the situation.
 - For example, unless you are the pilot, you have no control over how a flight will go, and you cannot control (beyond basic good health, exercise, and nutrition) whether you will contract a serious disease years from now.

The Amygdala: FIGHT – FLIGHT – FREEZE



- An increase in heart rate
- Your breathing speeds up
- You may feel breathless
- A choking or heavy feeling in your chest
- Muscles feel tense, achy or shaky
- You feel hot and maybe sweaty
- You become lightheaded
- Your vision may become blurred
- Butterflies or cramps in your stomach or an urge to go to the toilet
- **Your thoughts race so you can't think straight**

Effects of Stress

BRAIN EFFECTS

- Memory problems
- Inability to concentrate
- Poor judgment
- Seeing the negative rather than positive
- Constant worrying
- Anxious or racing thoughts

MOOD EFFECTS

- Moodiness
- Irritability or short fuse
- Agitation, inability to relax
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Depression or general unhappiness
- Sense of loneliness and isolation

PHYSICAL EFFECTS

- Aches and pains
- Frequent illnesses
- Diarrhea or constipation
- Nausea, dizziness
- Chest pain, racing heartbeat
- Loss of sex drive

BEHAVIORAL EFFECTS

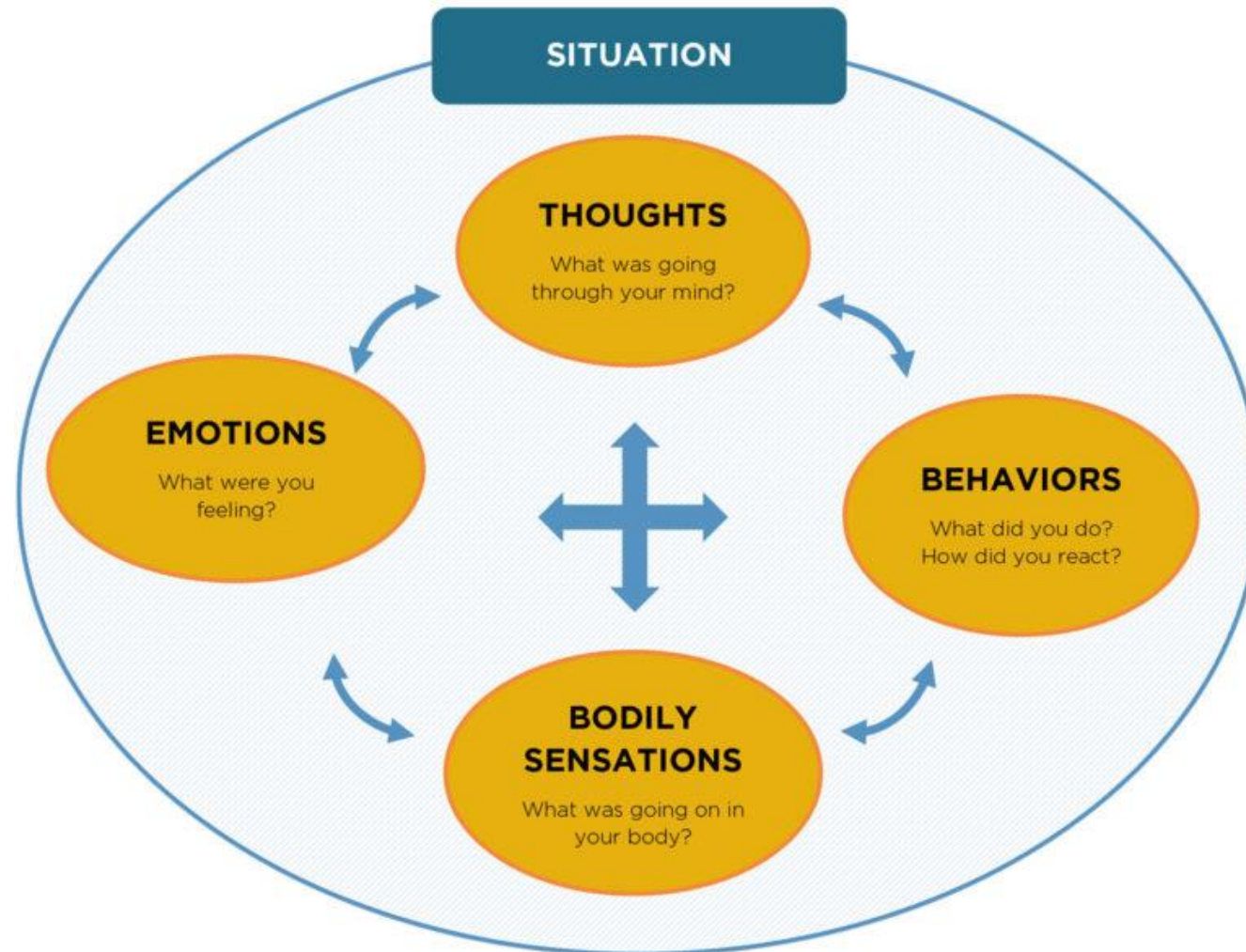
- Changes in eating habit (more or less)
- Changes in sleep habits (too much or too little)
- Isolating yourself from others
- Procrastinating or neglecting responsibilities
- Nervous habits (e.g. nail biting, pacing)
- Using alcohol, cigarettes or drugs to relax



How Much Have You Lost Due to Worrying?

- Has worry affected my friendships or relationships with others?
- Are people annoyed with me for worrying?
- How much time, effort, and energy have I spent worrying? Is it worth it?
- How has worry affected me physically?
- Am I tense all the time, often tired, or do I have trouble sleeping because of my worries?

Understanding the Process



One Situation, Two Experiences

Example 1: Susan was waiting for her teenage son Andrew to come home. He had promised to be home by midnight. As midnight drew closer, Susan began to have anxious thoughts about her son: Was he alright? What if something awful had happened? She could imagine horrific scenarios quite vividly. By the time it reached midnight, Susan was feeling very anxious. As each minute passed without Andrew arriving home, her anxiety levels continued to rise. She became convinced that something awful had happened and that she would be unable to cope. Andrew arrived home ten minutes late and explained that he had dropped a friend off on his way home, which had held him up.

Example 2: Mary was waiting for her teenage daughter Gemma to come home. Like Andrew, Gemma had promised to be home by midnight. When it reached 12 o'clock, Mary found herself wondering why Gemma was not home yet, which caused a pang of anxiety. She then reminded herself that Gemma had been a few minutes late on several occasions, and that the usual reason was that she had to rely on friends for a lift home. Her anxiety levels dropped and she continued to read her book.

Thought Record Log example

The situation	Your feelings	Automatic thoughts	Case for ...	Case against ...	Alternative balanced thought	Re-rate moods
Walking back from work at night	Anxious 80% Lonely 20% Scared 70%	Something awful is going to happen to me... I can't cope with feeling like this...	Sometimes people are attacked - and they are more vulnerable if they are on their own. My feelings are telling me that I am in danger.	I have done this trip hundreds of times and nothing bad has happened. I am in a well-lit street and there are lots of people in their houses on either side who I could call on for help if I needed to. When I feel like this I know after a few minutes my panic dies down. I am very close to home now. There is less and less opportunity for anything bad to happen.	I am at some risk but not nearly as high as my feelings are telling me. I have a plan and I could cope with most things that are likely to happen to me.	Anxious 50% Lonely 20% Scared 35%



Evaluating and Stopping Worrying

- *What's the evidence that the thought is true? That it's not true?*
- *Is there a more positive, realistic way of looking at the situation?*
- *What's the probability that what I'm scared of will actually happen?*
- *If the probability is low, what are some more likely outcomes?*
- *Is the thought helpful? How will worrying about it help me and how will it hurt me?*
- *What would I say to a friend who had this worry?*

6 Steps of Problem Solving

- 1. Define the problem.** Be specific about the task ahead. Try to think of the different steps that need to happen to complete the task. Tackling the problem in stages can be more manageable.
- 2. List solutions.** Think of as many ways of dealing with the problem as you can. No matter how silly the solution seems, the more solutions you generate the better!
- 3. Evaluate the pros and cons of each solution.** Think about how practical the solutions are, how much help you will need to put them into action and how effective you think they are going to be. Rank your solutions in order of usefulness.

6 Steps of Problem Solving

- 4. Choosing a solution and planning to put it into action.** Decide how you are going to implement your chosen solution. Make sure your plan is manageable – you should have the time and resources available to carry it through. If the plan is not manageable, then it will be very difficult to complete.
- 5. Do it.** Try out your solution, even if it is only the first step to solving the problem.
- 6. Review the outcome.** If your solution works and is sufficient, congratulate yourself and remember this successful experience for the future. If your solution does not solve the problem, try to understand why. Perhaps you were over ambitious, not feeling strong that day, or misjudged someone else's response to you. Learn as much as you can from the experience and go back to your solution list and select the next one.

References

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- <http://drsarahallen.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Simple-Steps-To-Overcome-Anxiety-and-Worrying.pdf>
- <https://www.ohwellbeing.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Coping-with-Anxiety-IAPT.pdf>

WellConnect for students and their household members

With WellConnect you have access to free and confidential:

- 24-hour telephonic support from licensed mental health professionals
- Free short-term counseling
- Professional help to address emotional stressors, test anxiety, relationship issues and more
- Legal and financial consultations
- Referrals for things like housing, utilities, childcare, and other local resources
- Health and wellness consultations
- The WellConnect website: <http://wellconnectforyou.com>

Contact us 866-640-4777



Utilize great resources from WellConnect!

The WellConnect website offers no-cost services to help:

- Handouts, short videos, and recommended apps to help you feel more resilient and calmer in anxious and hard times
- Work/Life referrals for childcare, eldercare, household tasks, and more
- Current and validated information and resources for COVID-19
- Legal and financial information
- Screening tools for anxiety, depression, resilience, and more
- Health information
- Check out the recipes, fitness information and many other resources to help to make this time more productive

<http://wellconnectforyou.com>

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Thank you for being with us today.