

# Rehab Services



## Coping with Stress and Anxiety

A guide for patients and carers

"Useful  
advice & tips"



## Feeling worried or anxious

Feeling worried or anxious is a natural response to situations that may be uncertain and it can have an effect upon our physical and mental health, functional ability and quality of life.

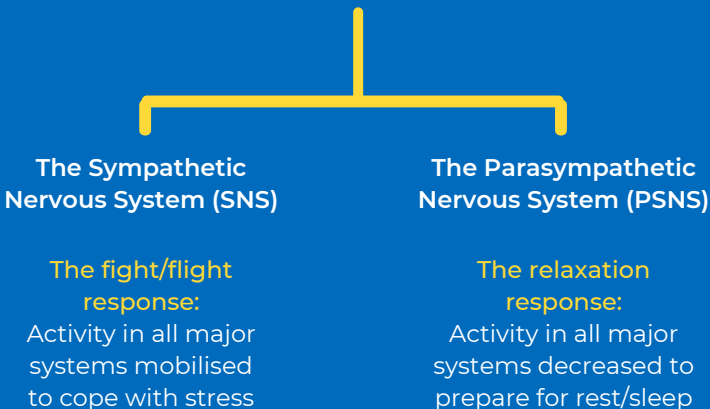


'Fight and Flight' is the term given to what happens to our body when we encounter a stressful event.

When this response is activated adrenaline and cortisol are released into the blood stream. This speeds up the body and makes us feel uncomfortable.

The dual function of the autonomic nervous system:

## The Autonomic Nervous System (ANS)

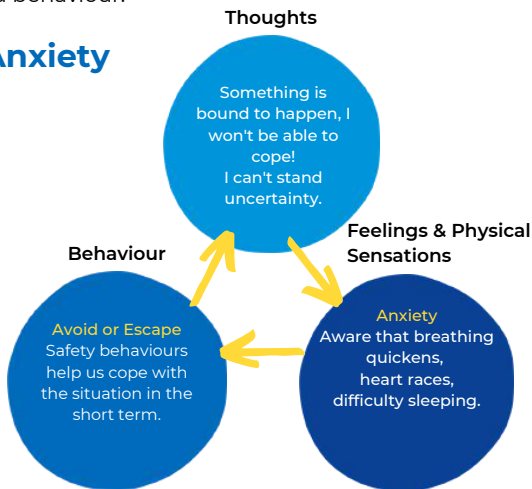


## Triggers

The things that trigger stress and anxiety will be different for each person. They might include fear of symptoms or side effects of treatment, fear of losing independence, uncertainty about the future or concern for family or friends.

These symptoms can be experienced through our thoughts, feelings, physical sensations and always affect our actions and behaviour.

## Cycle of Anxiety



### "Top Tip"

Write distracting and repetitive thoughts down. A notebook by the side of your bed may be particularly helpful at night.

# The body's alarm system

Feeling worried or anxious is a natural response to situations that may be uncertain and it can affect how you cope in daily life.

## Brain hijacked

Thoughts race which makes it hard to think clearly & rationally.

Feelings of being "unreal" or detached.

## Eyes widen

Allows more light in improves (or blurs) vision.

## Mouth dries

Caused by narrowing of the blood vessels.

## Head dizzy

Light-headed - results of faster breathing

## Breath fast & shallow

Help us take in more oxygen, which is then transported around the body system. Sometimes experience a choking feeling.

## Stomach churns

Adrenaline reduces blood flow & relaxes muscles in stomach & tenses intestines (blood diverted to limb muscles) causing nausea, butterflies or churning.

## Muscles tense

Blood, containing vital oxygen and glucose energy, is sent to the big muscles of the arms & legs.

## Bladder relaxes

Inner sphincter muscle relaxes so we might feel the urge to pass urine.

## Body heats & sweats

A side effect of all the speeded up systems is that the body rapidly heats. Sweating allows the body to cool again.

## Heart beats faster

Blood pressure and pulse increase as the heart pumps more blood to muscles, allowing us to run away or attack.

## Legs tremble & hands tingle

"Jelly legs". Blood is diverted to large muscles, and small blood vessels constrict, causing tingling, trembling or numbness.



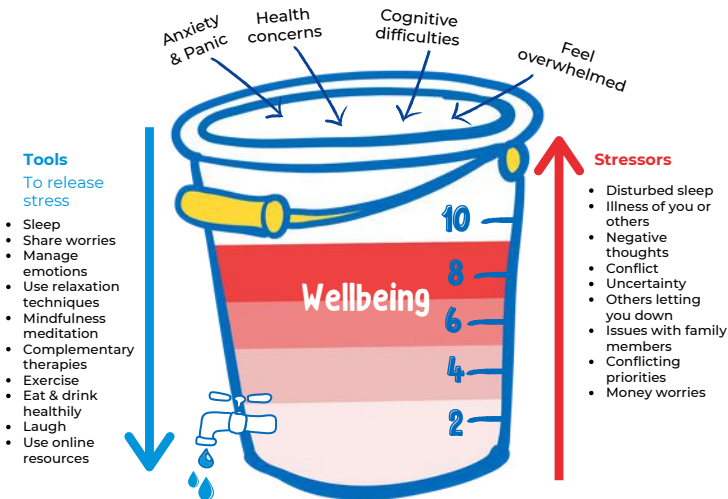
After the adrenaline has died down, we can feel exhausted, shaky and weak.

# Helping yourself - Coping skills toolbox

A coping skills toolbox is a place to keep things that calm you down in periods of stress.

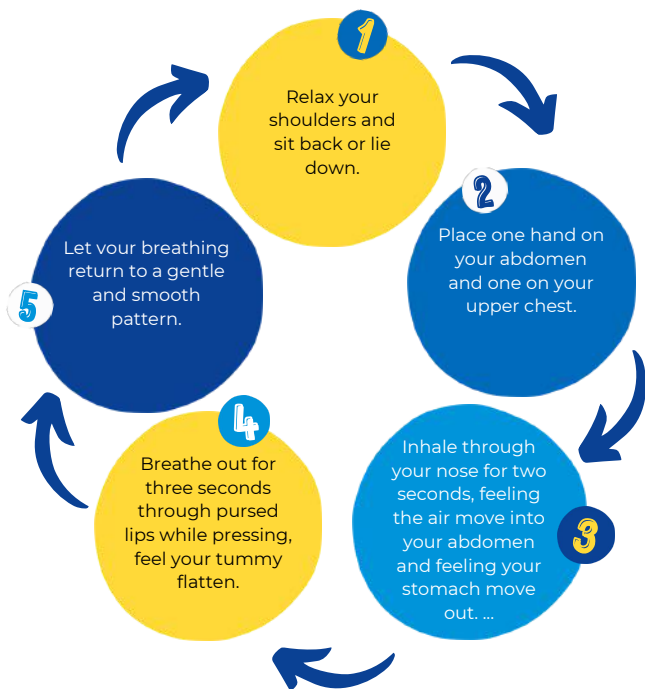


## The Stress Bucket



# Diaphragmatic breathing

Taking control of our breathing and introducing relaxation to our day may seem difficult to achieve. Like many skills the more you practice the easier you will find it.



Repeat this 3 times


# Coping Strategies


These are simple but very important activities you can do to improve your health and well-being, relax your body and calm your mind. These may take place on a 1:1 or in a group setting.


## Grounding exercises


These help keep someone present and regain mental focus.


### Sensory Awareness Strategies:

5 Things you can see 

4 Things you can touch 

3 Things you can hear 

2 Things you can smell 

1 Things you can taste 

### Cognitive Awareness Strategies:

- Count backwards from 20
- Sing Happy Birthday slowly
- Practice multiplication tables
- Go through the names of all of your family members
- Think through the lyrics of your favourite song
- Ask yourself what is the;
  - time
  - date
  - month
  - year
- Relay your birth date and age

## Body scan

Involves paying attention to parts of the body in a gradual sequence from feet to head. This helps bring awareness to every part of your body, noticing aches, pains, tension or general discomfort.



# Muscular relaxation

**Passive Muscular Relaxation** - Release of tension in the mind reduces tension in the muscles.

**Progressive muscular relaxation** - Teaches you to recognise tension by 'tensing then releasing' each muscle group in turn.

This is an example of a short relaxation exercise that you can try to help relax your posture and reduce muscle tension:

- Make sure you are unlikely to be disturbed.
- You can choose to close your eyes or focus your vision on a particular spot in the room.
- Begin by practising your breathing exercises, breathing gently in and out.
- Allow your body and head to feel supported by the chair.
- Drop your shoulders, unfold your arms, rest your hands in your lap.
- Allow your forehead to smooth.
- Feel your jaw relax.
- Allow your teeth and lips to lie slightly apart.
- Become aware of any tension in your back and allow yourself to sink deeper and deeper into the chair.
- Find any tight or knotted feelings in your tummy, let them ease to the side.
- Uncross your legs and ankles, feel any tension drain away from the tops of your legs, through your knees and calves to your feet.
- Your whole body is now sinking deeper as a warm and comfortable feeling takes over. Just relax for the next few moments, just relax.
- Become aware once more of your breathing, ensuring it is even and slow.
- Gently start to move your hands and fingers and then your feet and toes.
- When you feel ready open your eyes and familiarise yourself with your surroundings once again.

# Mindfulness Meditation



**Mind full**

**or**

**Mindful ?**

## How to be more mindful

Reminding yourself to take notice of your thoughts, feelings, body sensations and the world around you is the first step to mindfulness.

As we go about our daily lives, we can notice our breathing, the air moving past the body as we walk. We can pay attention to all our senses.

Your mind may wander but gently guide your attention back to your breathing.

The breath anchors you in the present and like a good friend it reminds you that you are OK just the way you are.

## Guided imagery/Visualisation

This is a therapeutic technique which uses the imagination to reduce anxiety. It involves the use of the senses in your mind's eye.

It may be a place you have been in the past or created in your imagination. A favourite walk, a meadow on a warm day, a shady spot in the woods, a quiet beach at sun set or snuggled up in front of a fire.

Alternatively you might like to focus on your favourite item such as a photograph, painting or ornament.

For many colour has always been important. We all perceive colour differently, some may help you feel more energised some may help you to feel calm and relaxed. Spend a few moments visualising a colour you find most healing.



Studies have shown that positive imagery reduces muscle tension and from negative thoughts occurring.

# Thinking and doing things differently

STOP! Pause, take a deep breath.



## Ask yourself:

- What am I reacting to ?
- What do I think is going to happen?
- What's the worst and the best that could happen?
- Am I getting things out of proportion?
- Am I underestimating my ability to cope?
- Is there another way of dealing with this?
- What do I want or need from this person or situation?
- Problem solve and make necessary plans
- Take things slowly and gradually
- Try not to avoid or leave situations
- Focus your attention outside of yourself
- Visualise yourself coping in the situation you feel anxious about

## Positive Affirmations

POSITIVE  
VIBES

Try using a positive statement when you notice you have a negative thought. Repeat throughout the day or week. Start the sentence with "I"

See examples below:

I am in control of my life

I have a lot to be proud of

I am a good and worthwhile person

I'm moving toward my goals

## Calming Skills

- Deep Breathing
- Relaxation techniques
- Mindful walk
- Yoga
- Imagine your favourite place
- Think of your favourite things
- Picture the people you care about
- Positive self-talk
- Take a shower or bath
- Take a break
- Block out noise
- Remember words to a song you love
- Listen or play music

## Distraction Skills

- Write a story or a poem
- Try a crossword, or sudoku
- Bake or cook
- Read
- Play with a pet
- Call a friend
- Do your favourite thing
- Begin a crafting project
- Start a hobby
- Try some gardening
- Play a board game
- Do a random act of kindness
- Laugh



Tick the ones you do now or want to try.

## Resources for Relaxation and Meditation

Below are some different apps to help you with relaxing and meditation.



Sleep School



Calm



Headspace



Pzizz



Sleepio



Sleep Station



Insight Timer

Or visit our Hospice website

<https://www.hospice.org.im/our-care/hospice-care/our-adult-services/rehabilitation/rehabresources/relaxation-and-mindfulness>

# Questions?

Any other questions please contact:

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