

Eight Top Tips for Beating Anxiety

beating anxiety quickly and effectively
without pills



Anxiety - friend or foe?

Anxiety can be extremely useful when it serves to keep us safe. It is appropriate, for example, that when we are about to cross a busy road, that we focus on the potential risks from traffic. Having no anxiety in this situation might result in us walking across without looking - which could easily get us killed. This is an example of useful anxiety because it helps us to take appropriate action.

Never experiencing anxiety would be a very dangerous thing. We need some anxiety to stay safe and to help us focus on the things that are important for our well-being.

However, there is a time and a place for it. Anxiety can be appropriate and helpful when it helps us to make a decision. But we normally expect this kind of anxiety to subside once it has served this purpose, a decision has been made and action taken.

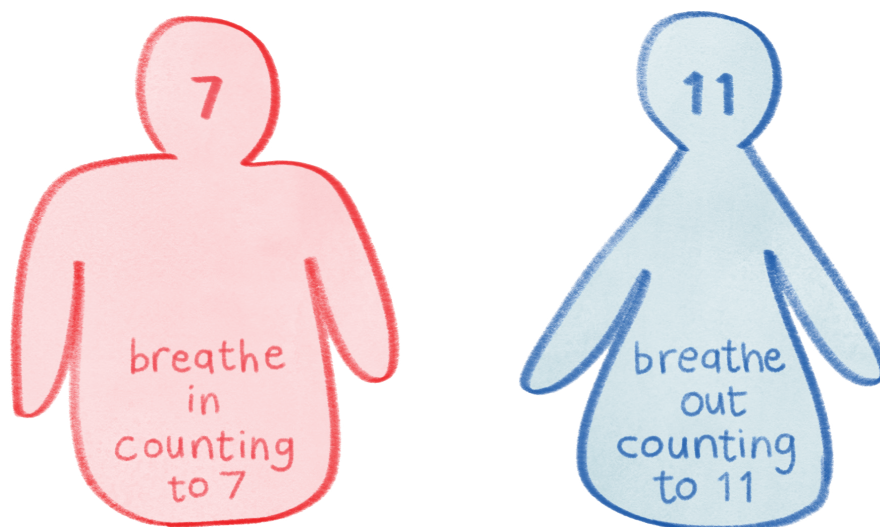
However, anxiety which has become a habit or which is due to prolonged stress can make our life miserable. This is because anxiety invokes our “fight, flight or freeze” response which helps us to survive when we are in immediate danger or when we need to protect ourselves. The side effects of this response include raised levels of the stress hormone cortisol, loss of appetite, impaired ability to think clearly and impaired memory - known as “emotional hijack”. Prolonged anxiety is dangerous for our long term mental and physical health. It can lead to depression, risk-taking and addictive behaviour as well as more serious health concerns.

So it is vitally important that we have a realistic and healthy relationship with this powerful emotional state. We need to develop techniques to keep calm in situations where our emotional response is stronger than needed.

The following techniques can help us to cope when we feel anxious. We are all different, so we recommend trying them before choosing those which work best for you. All of them work by effectively sending a message to our brain that despite how we are currently feeling, there is actually no tiger about to jump on us and eat us. A panic attack will not kill us, even though it can feel like it might at the time.

1. The 7 - 11 breathing technique

If you are going to learn just one anxiety management technique, this is the one you should master!



This simple technique¹ should be practiced regularly before you get into an anxious situation so that your body is already familiar with it and you can then use it easily in the heat of the moment.

- Breathe using your diaphragm (your belly should move in and out, rather than your shoulders moving up and down).
- Count from one to seven during each in-breath (at a speed which suits your lungs! For most people, this is faster than one count per second.)
- Count from one to eleven during each out-breath (at the same speed that you used for counting in).
- Keep this up for 10 to 15 minutes without stopping the counting.

This technique may take some discipline and practice to master. It works best if you first practice it daily before applying it in situations that might feel challenging. Breathing this way is a fast way to relax your body and mind. But this means that after a few minutes you are likely to feel drowsy and your mind is likely to wander. This is normal! The challenge is to find your own way to allow yourself to become deeply relaxed **without** forgetting to keep counting.

You can find more about this powerful technique here and even download an accompanying audio:

>> <https://www.in8.uk.com/information-resources/7-11-breathing/>

¹ See <https://www.in8.uk.com/information-resources/7-11-breathing/>

2. The STOP technique

Whenever you spot a negative thought sneaking into your thoughts, imagine putting out your arm and saying:

"Stop! I recognise this as a negative thought. It is real & I'm not going to deny it but..."

Then imagine moving your hand to the side saying:

"I'm going to place it to the side so I can deal with it later if I can be bothered. Right now, I've got more important things to get on with!"



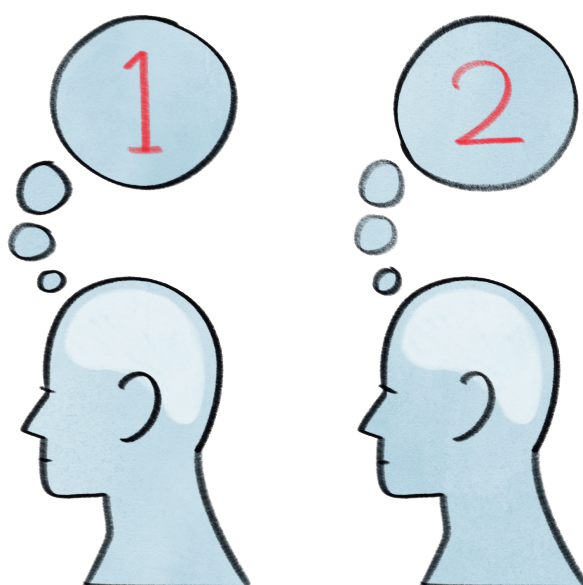
3. The 1st / 2nd thought technique

You don't get to choose the first thought that comes into your head. It is often an automatic and emotional response to an external stimulus.

But you can choose the second thought...

An important aspect of handling anxiety is to learn to control where you place your attention.

Remember that it is easy to confuse the feeling of excitement with anxiety because they feel very similar within our bodies. It can be useful to re-frame any feelings of anxiety **as excitement** instead - especially when stepping into a situation which is outside your normal comfort zone.



4. The AWARE technique

This simple technique can help reduce the symptoms of anxiety and panic attacks. Commit the five letters and each associated step to memory (or write them on a slip of paper and keep it in your purse / wallet / pocket. Go through the following steps whenever you start to feel anxious.

Accept	<p>The first step is to accept whatever is happening to you. Don't fight the panic. Your body is telling you that it is anxious - big deal! It doesn't mean that you are going to have a panic attack, faint, die or embarrass yourself. Breathe calmly.</p> <p>Tap your first finger with your thumb five times as you remember the first step - "Accept".</p>
Watch	<p>Watch your emotional state. Try to stand outside the anxiety and observe it. Scale it from 1 to 10. Notice what makes the feelings rise, and also notice when the intensity falls.</p> <p>Tap your index finger with your thumb five times as you remember the second step - to "Watch" your emotional state.</p>
Act	<p>Act normally. Don't try to escape. That will only bring temporary relief. Pretend that everything is going to be OK - even if you don't really believe it yet.</p> <p>Tap your middle finger with your thumb five times as you remember the third step - to "Act normally"</p>
Repeat	<p>Repeat the first three stages as required. Accept the situation, Watch your emotional state and Act normally.</p> <p>Tap your fourth finger with your thumb five times as you recall the fourth step - to "Repeat as required".</p>
Expect	<p>Expect the best! Your body is trying to help, but it has developed a habit of overreacting. Your job now is to retrain it to act appropriately.</p> <p>Tap your little finger with your thumb five times as you recall the final step to "Expect the best outcome".</p>

5. The T-Cup technique

In the England vs. Australia Rugby World Cup Final in 2003, twice England were penalised unfairly and having been the best team, could easily have lost.

The England captain, Martin Johnson spoke to them. He said: *“Forget the past. There is only the next few minutes to focus on. The future is all that counts”*.



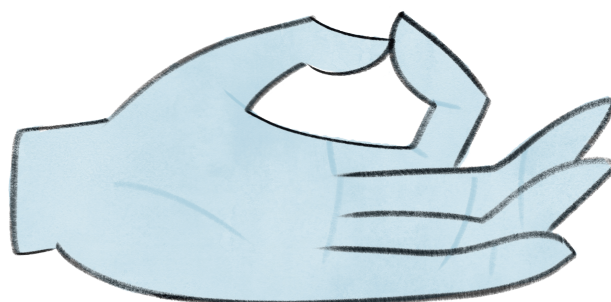
Johnny Wilkinson scored a drop goal in the last minute of extra time to win 20 - 17. To help each other focus the team used to say to each other:

“Teacup” - Think Clearly Under Pressure.

6. The clench technique

This can help you to objectify your anxiety, to stand back, get perspective and take control over it.

Clench your thumb and fore finger together, or clench your toes.



Imagine that all the stress you feel is located at that point of contact. Notice that you can increase and decrease the intensity by altering the pressure.

7. Choose your own metaphor

We tend to rely upon our ability to think rationally whenever we face a difficult challenge. There are some things that our rational thinking can do really well, such as analysing a situation, evaluating options and planning a strategy. But sometimes our “Rational thinking” tool is not the most appropriate tool to use and we should

remember that we have other innate resources that we can also draw upon.

Metaphors can create a meaningful connection between our experience and our imagination. Choosing something to represent either the source of our anxiety or the way we could imagine being immune to its effects can be an extremely effective strategy.

Our brains respond in a very similar manner to both real and imagined threats. So using our imagination in a creative way can be just as effective (sometimes even more effective) than a more logical or “sensible” approach.

Imagine a protective bubble around you. Choose the colour, the texture, the size. Imagine that it deflects all negative energies - preventing them from reaching you.

Or, imagine something like a “Ring of confidence” as a halo protecting you.

Imagine that stress “simply passes over your head” - leaving you totally unaffected, feeling calm and relaxed.

Invent your own image or imaginative way to deal with anxiety - it doesn't matter how weird it might seem since no one else needs to know how you are using your imagination! Even purely imaginative techniques can work really effectively!

8. Get your innate needs met

This is perhaps the most useful of all these tips since it is an extremely effective long term strategy, but it is also perhaps the hardest to implement when you are already in an anxious state - which is why we have placed it last.

Anxiety can be described as our **emotional response to stress**. And we are under stress whenever one or more of our innate needs is compromised or missing. Since one of our innate needs is to feel safe, we can confidently say that any threat to our sense of security is likely to provoke anxiety. So far, so good.

But our innate needs also include the following:

- The need to breathe, eat and drink.
- The need to move our bodies.
- The need to sleep.
- The need to feel safe.
- The need to give and receive attention.
- The need for emotional connection - for fun, friendship and intimacy.
- The need for a sense of autonomy and control.
- The need for a sense of achievement.
- The need to feel respected by others.
- The need to feel part of a community.
- The need for privacy - time for reflection.
- The need for a sense of meaning and purpose.

So we may feel stressed, and therefore anxious when any of the above needs are missing or lacking in our life.

Focusing on getting our needs met will always help us to feel more relaxed, less stressed and more alive.

Go through the list above and identify which if any of these needs might be missing in the situations in which you feel anxious. What could you do to get this need met in another way?

We have developed an innovative and highly effective tool which helps you to figure out not only which of your innate needs may be missing, but also which of your innate resources might be best used to get that missing need better met.



“Anxiety Freedom Cards” are available from **in8.uk.com** and are a wonderful tool whether you are struggling with your own anxiety, or wishing to help others overcome chronic anxiety. The tips in this document are extracts from a chapter of the book which is supplied as a PDF download with the cards.

Further help

Hello from Alec and Bindi at in8.

For many years, we have been helping people to improve their emotional health and well-being using our training and experience as psychotherapists.

We focus on the 'innate needs' and 'innate resources' of human beings. Because this begins with understanding what can be considered to be a "given" for human beings, it is known as the **human givens approach** - or "HG".



We help our clients to recognise their innate resources (skills and abilities) so that they can employ them to get their innate needs met in balance. When our human needs are well met, we do not suffer prolonged anxiety or stress. We use these ideas extensively with individuals, couples, families and groups. We have also taught hundreds of practitioners to use this approach to help others.

And please share with us any comments or suggestions that you may have for helping others overcome anxiety. We look forward to hearing from you.

Alec & Bindi

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