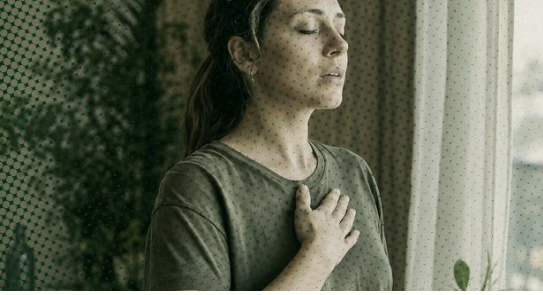
mindhealth FACT SHEET

ANXIETY · UNDERSTANDING & MANAGING IT

# Understanding anxiety

*Your body's alarm system, doing its job, just a little too often.*



**In the body**
Racing heart, tight chest

**In your thoughts**
Worry, "what if", dread

**In your behaviour**
Avoiding, over-checking

## 01 Why anxiety happens

Anxiety is your fight-or-flight response: a burst of adrenaline that sharpens focus and readies you to act. It is meant to be brief and occasional. The difficulty begins when the alarm starts firing at everyday situations that aren't truly dangerous: a meeting, a message, a crowded train.

## 02 Why it sticks around

Avoidance is the engine. Stepping around what makes us anxious brings instant relief, which quietly teaches the brain the threat was real, so the fear returns a little stronger. Facing it gradually does the opposite: anxiety rises, peaks, and falls on its own as the body relearns that it is safe.

## 03 What genuinely helps

- Understanding how anxiety works, so symptoms feel less frightening
- Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) to test anxious predictions
- Gradual, planned exposure to feared situations
- Slow breathing and grounding for the physical surge
- Protecting sleep and easing back on caffeine

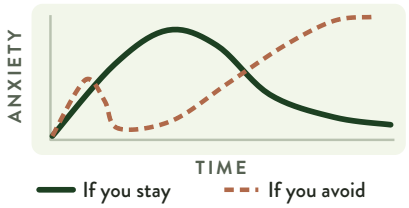
A PRACTICAL STORY

*From bracing against the fear to letting the wave pass*




THE EVIDENCE

### Face it, and it fades




*Facing a fear lets anxiety peak, then fall. Avoiding brings fast relief, but a higher spike next time.*

PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

### The 4·4·6 breath

| | |
|---|---|
| Breathe in | 4s |
| Hold | 4s |
| Breathe out | 6s |

*A longer out-breath signals safety.*

WHEN TO SEEK HELP

If anxiety stops you working, studying or seeing people, or you find yourself avoiding more and more, a psychologist can help. Ask your GP about a Mental Health Treatment Plan for Medicare rebates.

DID YOU KNOW?

Anxiety comes from the Latin angere, meaning to choke or squeeze tight.

*Oxford English Dictionary*

THE KEY TAKEAWAY

*Anxiety isn't dangerous: it's an alarm that has become oversensitive. It can be turned down.*

**Need support right now?** Lifeline **13 11 14** · Emergency **000** — available 24/7. More options: **mindhealth.com.au/urgent-help**

TALK TO US WHEN YOU'RE READY

Parramatta and online, Australia-wide · **Book at mindhealth.com.au**

**1300 084 200**

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