



COPING UNDER QUARANTINE; ANXIETY





INTRODUCTION TO ANXIETY

can't sleep
burn out
nervous weak worrier
anxiety
sweating tense tired
restless stress
trembling nerves
trouble concentrating

Often, if someone has been dealing with stress for too long anxiety usually rears its ugly head.

This document has been created to help you understand

- what anxiety is
- what causes it
- how to manage it effectively



WHAT IS ANXIETY

Simply put, anxiety is a very reasonable response to situations we perceive as threatening to us.

Depending on who is reading this document, a threatening situation can be many things; an exam, a performance review maybe even a visit from the In-Laws. You must understand that not all anxiety is bad, at certain levels, it can actually be helpful to cope in certain situations.

However, some anxieties are not helpful at all. Some symptoms, while not dangerous, can be very uncomfortable and frightening, particularly for someone who does not know what these symptoms are, or how to deal with them. If not understood properly, people with anxiety symptoms may begin to worry there is something seriously wrong with them. This can exacerbate pre existing conditions, its a vicious cycle.

Overtime sufferers can develop physical problems such as stomach issues and even high blood pressure.




AM I SUFFERING FROM ANXIETY

Have you ever been on your way to an event or social gathering and before you even get there, you start to worry about what could go wrong? Your heart starts to pound, and legs turn to jelly? That is anxiety.

That is just one of the many typical experiences people who suffer from anxiety go through. However, it's possible to suffer from anxiety and not even know it. Commonly, people mistake anxiety for physical illness. So you must take the first step in learning to deal with anxiety and whether or not it's a problem for you.

It can affect us in four different ways:

- 1) The way we think
 - 2) The way our body works
 - 3) The way we behave
 - 4) The way we feel
- 



WHAT CAUSES ANXIETY

Anxiety is essentially an evolutionary response to a threat. You may have heard of the 'Fight or Flight response' this is your body preparing to either fight the threat or run from it, as fast as you possibly can.

Fortunately today we do not often depend on the 'Fight or Flight Response' for our survival like our cave-dwelling ancestors did. However, many of the problems we come across today can be fought or run away from. So, the symptoms we experience often make us feel worse, especially if you do not understand them.

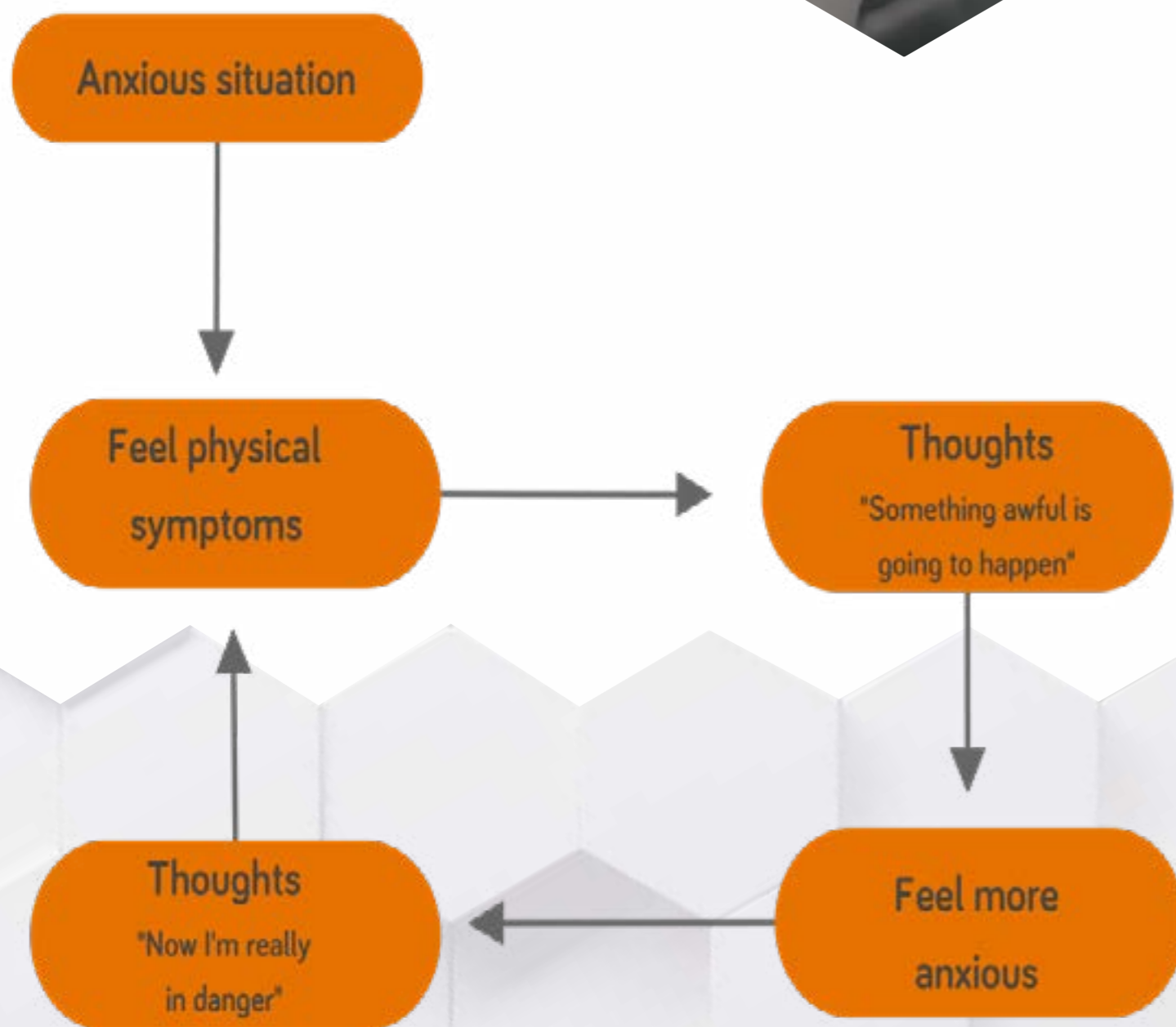
CAUSES OF ANXIETY

Anxiety can be triggered in several ways, here are just a few examples:

- People with anxious personalities who tend to worry a lot may have inadvertently learned to worry a lot more than usual.
- Early childhood experiences can lead to people having increased feelings of insecurity or anxiousness.
- Stressful life events can trigger anxiety such as bereavement, divorce, or a global pandemic, such as the one we are experiencing now.



WHAT SUSTAINS ANXIETY



For some people, anxiety is an ongoing battle and can become a lifelong problem that they must deal with. There are several reasons for this:

- 1) You may have an anxious personality or be a worrier, this can develop a habit of feeling anxious.
- 2) Ongoing stresses in your life may lead to a pattern of being anxious.
- 3) In anxious situations, you often feel there is something physically wrong with you, or something really awful is about to happen. This itself causes more symptoms, and a cycle develops.



MANAGING ANXIETY

As you now know, anxiety is not an illness or something that can be cured, it's a reaction. The good news is you can learn to reduce your anxiety by focussing on four different areas:

- 1) Understanding what anxiety is and what causes it
- 2) Reduce the physical symptoms of anxiety
- 3) Change your thoughts related to anxiety
- 4) taking note of specific behaviours that trigger anxiety and change them





UNDERSTANDING AND TACKLING ANXIETY

By now, hopefully, you understand what situations, place or even people are causing your anxiety. The next tips should help you begin to manage your anxiety better.

1) Write things down!

Over the next three weeks (maybe longer if the lockdown keeps up) keep an hourly or daily diary. Write down when you felt anxious, what time was it, what were you doing and where were you (at home I hope) Try to remember what you were thinking about and what your overall stress levels were like. These bits of information should help you begin to tackle your anxiety.

2) Take a 'problem solving' approach

If by this stage, you have realised what triggers your anxiety, a problem-solving approach may really benefit you. As we mentioned above, the best place to start is to write the problem down. Then write out as many solutions as you can, no matter how silly.

You may find you have had similar problems in the past, how did you solve those? Could the same method be used? Reach out to your friends and family, see what they might do in the same situation.

3) Lifestyle - general tips

In today's day and age, life is stressful, and it's so easy for the pressures to build-up. Unfortunately, there is a lot of things that are not in our control.

However, we can find ways to reduce the stress we put on ourselves.

Improve your awareness

- Take note of situations where you feel the tension growing.
- Take steps to tackle what it is about the situation that makes it stressful.
- Make time to do the things you enjoy.
- Take up a relaxing hobby like arts and crafts, painting etc.
- SLEEP SLEEP SLEEP.
- A well-balanced diet is crucial, and so is regular exercise.
- Learn to relax.

We will go into more detail about stress in another workbook that can be found here - **{INSERT LINK TO RESOURCE HUB HERE}**



REDUCING PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS OF ANXIETY

1) Relaxation

- Recognising the early signs of symptoms is the best way to get ahead of your anxiety. One of the best ways to prevent anxiety from becoming too severe is to practice relaxation techniques.
- People relax in lots of different ways, reading, exercise, watching TV or listening to music. However, for some people, a different approach is needed. Apps such as [Calm](#) and [Headspace](#) are great for guided meditation sessions. Yoga has been proven to be a great way to mentally slow down, block out distractions and increase your awareness.
- Relaxation is a skill you can learn and develop over time, like any other. Create a timetable and plot in the times of the day you are going to put aside to focus on you.

2) Deep Muscle Relaxation

The following method is a great way to relax your muscles and reduce the physical symptoms of anxiety.

1. First, find a warm, quiet place to lay down and start to focus on your breathing, inhale for two-three seconds, hold for two seconds and exhale in two-three seconds.
2. The next phase of this technique takes you through relaxing different parts of the body. Teaching you to first tense the muscle studying its effect and how it affects other parts of the body. Then you relax the muscle and notice the tension slowly releasing. Remember that feeling.
3. You must stick to the same order as you work through the muscle groups.

Hands - clench fist, then relax.

Arms - Bend elbows and tense arms, hold for a few seconds then relax.

Neck - Press your head back, roll it from side to side slowly, then return to a normal position.

Face - The face has lots of muscles, but focus on the forehead and jaw. First, lower your eyebrows in a frown, then relax. Do the same but raising the eyebrows. Now, clench your jaw.

Chest - Take in a deep breathe, hold for a few seconds, notice the tension, now relax, letting your breathing return to normal and repeat.

Stomach - Tense your stomach muscles as tight as you can, hold and relax.

Buttocks - Squeeze your buttocks together, and relax.

Legs - Straighten your legs and bend your feet towards your face, wriggle your toes, then relax.



REDUCING PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS OF ANXIETY

3) Control your breathing

It very common when people suffer anxiety, the rate of their breath begins to increase, gulping for air, giving the feeling of suffocation and dizziness. This is more commonly known as hyperventilation or over-breathing.

By practising awareness techniques, you will notice when this is happening. When you do, try to slow your breathing down in a regular rhythm in for two-three seconds, out for two-three seconds.

If you find yourself hyperventilating and you do the above exercises, it can take at least three minutes of slow breathing before returning to normal.

4) Distraction can be useful

Taking your mind off of your symptoms, often helps them disappear. Try to study things in detail that are around you. Tree's, number plates, what shoes are people wearing? Anything to distract you from what is causing the anxiety.

One final point, while physical symptoms of anxiety can be horrible, it's essential to understand that anxiety is not harmful or dangerous.

If you did none of the techniques listed above, nothing terrible would happen to you. Anxiety cannot harm you, but it is uncomfortable.

To make the most of any of the above techniques it's essential, you do the following

- Practice daily.
- Use them in everyday situations where you start to feel physical symptoms of anxiety.
- Learn to relax without having to tense muscles.
- Develop a more relaxed lifestyle.



ALTERING YOUR THOUGHTS RELATED TO ANXIETY

1) controlling anxious thoughts

It's not always easy to recognise the thoughts you have that contribute to your anxiety, they can come and go in a flash. They could also be an automatic response, a habit you have inadvertently developed. Even the smallest of thoughts like 'oh no' can increase tension and anxiety, so try not to ignore them. Once you have realised what it is you are thinking that triggers your anxiety, you can begin to fight back by doing the following;

ask yourself

- Am I exaggerating
- Am I jumping to conclusions
- Is all my attention on the bad things that **COULD** happen

2) Mindfulness

A form of meditation, mindfulness helps you be present in the moment. It's about observing what is happening with calm, non-judging awareness. It can be a very useful tool for not getting carried away with your thoughts. There are lots of studies that show mindfulness can help reduce worry and anxiety.

The following mindful breathing exercise can be helpful.

- find a quiet place, sit up straight and close your eyes focus on the rhythm of your breathing, the gentle, natural pace of your breath going in and out.
- You will find thoughts popping into your head, and that's fine, that's natural. Let the thoughts come in, notice them and then bring your attention back to your breathing.
- You may notice sounds, physical feelings and even emotions, but just bring your attention back to your breathing.
- It's important not to follow your thoughts down a rabbit hole, don't judge yourself for having them or read into them too much. Just acknowledge the thoughts and let them drift off, focussing back on your breathing.

The more you practice these exercises, the more it will help you to manage your anxiety. If you are really struggling, We recommend 15-20 minutes a day.



CHANGING YOUR BEHAVIOURS RELATED TO ANXIETY

You must recognise situations you actively avoid due to anxiety. Overtime these scenarios will seem far more difficult to overcome than they actually are.

- Identify when you are actively avoiding situations that trigger anxiety. Try to tackle these fears, not all at once, but gradually
- Set yourself goals that you want to achieve related to your anxiety. Write them down and start with the smallest first, then the next one and move up the list. Each small win 'snowballs' into a significant victory, and will make you feel better about what yourself and what you have achieved.

We hope this resource has helped you, if you need any further resources around mental and physical wellbeing, please visit our

[Business continuity and keeping your employees engaged through Covid-19](#)

page on our website, you will find everything we offer our clients employee's there, for free during this time. We hope you get some comfort and value from these.

Stay safe, stay healthy, stay at home.

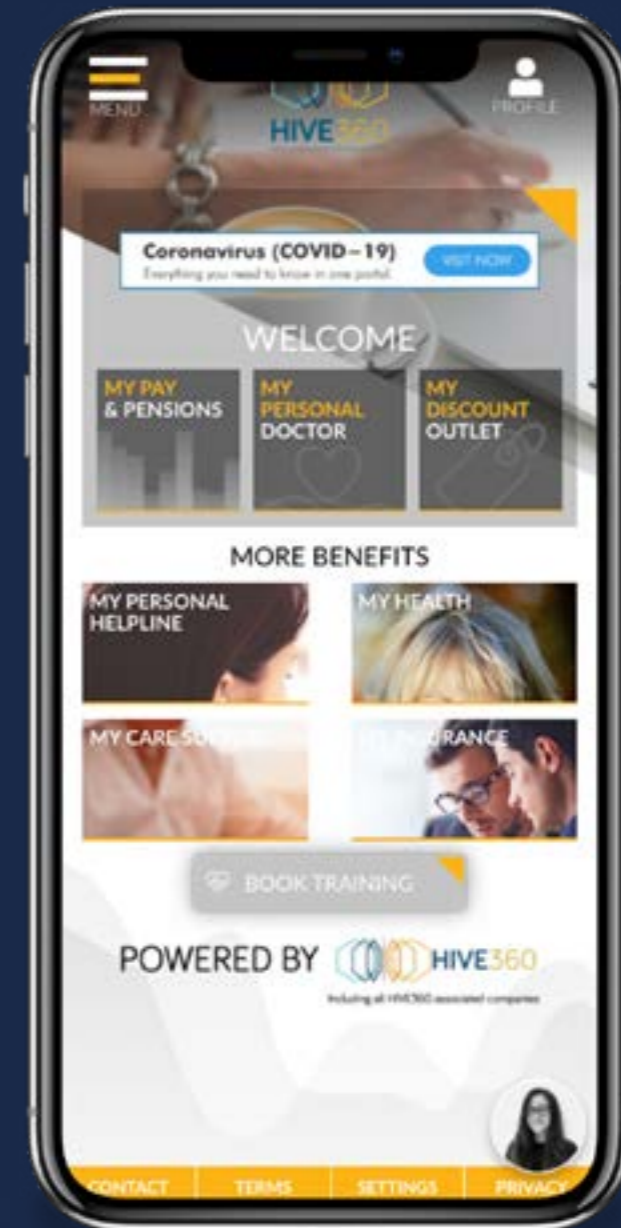


WHO ARE HIVE360?

Hive360 empowers businesses of all sizes to achieve better engagement with their people.

We believe that everyone deserves the best work-life experience and that great communication, wellbeing support and financial benefits are the cornerstones of this.

Our game-changing engagement platform delivers better communication, vital healthcare support and attractive lifestyle benefits in the palm of your hand.





HIVE360 Ltd
8th Floor, West Wing
54 Hagley Rd, Edgbaston,
Birmingham B16 8PE

0121 661 4851
hello@hive360.com

www.hive360.com