

What is anxiety?



Anxiety is a natural response to stress and an important way our minds and bodies help keep us safe.

While it's common to feel anxious from time to time, anxiety can become harder to manage when feelings of worry, dread, or fear stick around or start to affect your everyday life.

1 in 4 people experience anxiety at some point in their lives.

Types of anxiety

Generalised anxiety disorder (GAD)

Ongoing, excessive worries about everyday things not tied to a specific event.

Social anxiety

Constant fear of being judged or watched by others.

Phobias

Intense, long-lasting fears of specific things, situations, or activities.

Panic attacks

Brief episodes of intense mental and physical anxiety symptoms.

Signs & effects

Anxiety can feel different for everyone, but some common experiences include:



Restlessness or unease

Feeling on edge, like something bad might happen.



Overthinking

Repetitive or distressing thoughts that are hard to switch off.



Physical sensations

Tension, racing heart, shaking, sweating, dizziness, or nausea.



Sleep difficulties

Trouble falling or staying asleep, leading to tiredness or brain fog.



Avoidance

Steering clear of people, places, or situations that trigger anxiety.



Feeling stuck

Struggling to start tasks or make decisions due to worry or overwhelm.

Causes

Anxiety can develop from a mix of experiences and factors, such as:

Past experiences

Living in an unstable environment, experiencing trauma, or seeing anxiety in family members.

Life pressures

Cost of living, health concerns, or relationship problems.

Mental wellbeing

Low self-esteem, negative thought cycles, and unmanaged anger.

Physical health

Chronic pain, injuries, poor sleep, perimenopause, and genetics.

Substance use

Alcohol, caffeine, or other substances that can lead to or worsen anxiety.

Specific triggers

Crowds, reminders of trauma, or certain objects, places, or fears.

Experiencing anxiety is never your fault.

Regardless of what might be causing anxiety, there are many ways to manage it. And remember, support is available every step of the way.

Recognising when and how your anxiety shows up

Having a plan like below is a great way to anticipate challenging situations, identify how they might affect you, and have practical strategies to manage anxiety.

Anxiety management plan

Anticipate

What might cause my anxiety?

e.g. work stress, relationship problems, finances

Identify

How will I know I'm feeling anxious?

e.g. Trouble sleeping, tension, looping thoughts

Manage

What can I do to cope?

e.g. do a grounding technique, call a friend, go for a walk, or see a therapist



Practical management strategies



Talk to someone you trust

Sharing your worries can make them feel less overwhelming.



Move your body

Walking, yoga, or any gentle exercise can help ease anxious energy.



Cut back on caffeine and alcohol

Reducing caffeine, alcohol, or other substances can help lower anxiety levels.



Use a grounding technique

Focusing on what's around you can help calm your body and mind.



Make sleep a priority

Good-quality sleep can help you cope better with daily stress.

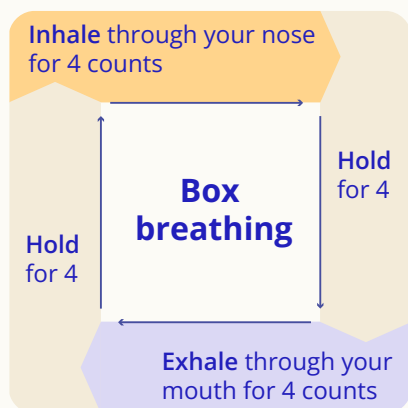


Get support

A therapist or support group can provide tools and understanding to help manage anxiety.

Want to try something now?

If you're feeling distressed or unsure where to start, a **grounding technique** like **box breathing**, **reciting something in order**, or using your **five senses** can help ease physical sensations and take your focus off what's causing you to feel anxious.



Try reciting:

ABc... the alphabet



the months backwards



what you did yesterday

The 5 senses technique

Look for:

- 5 things you can **see**
- 4 things you can **feel**
- 3 things you can **hear**
- 2 things you can **smell**
- 1 thing you can **taste**



Everyone is different, so what works for someone else might not work for you, and that's okay.

The key is to keep exploring until you find what helps you most.

When to seek help

You may want to speak to a health professional if:

- ✓ Your anxiety feels overwhelming or doesn't seem to go away.
- ✓ Worrying is affecting your daily life, self-esteem, or relationships.
- ✓ You're avoiding people, places, or activities to cope with anxiety.
- ✓ You're struggling to keep up with responsibilities at work or school.
- ✓ Symptoms like headaches or difficulty sleeping aren't improving.
- ✓ You're experiencing frequent or overwhelming panic attacks.

Reaching out can feel difficult, but it's a sign of strength.

Support is always available to help you feel more in control and hopeful for the future.

Support is available

Understanding and managing anxiety isn't something you have to do on your own.

Head to our **Support Toolkit** to find more practical strategies and discover national and local support services that can help.


The Support Toolkit also offers information on a wide range of mental health and wellbeing topics you can explore at your own pace, whenever you need.

Visit lifeline.org.au/anxiety/services or scan the QR code to get started.



If you're feeling overwhelmed right now, Lifeline is here to support you.

You can reach us 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

 Call 13 11 14

 Text 0477 131 114

 Chat online at lifeline.org.au/crisis-chat

If your life is in danger, please call 000.