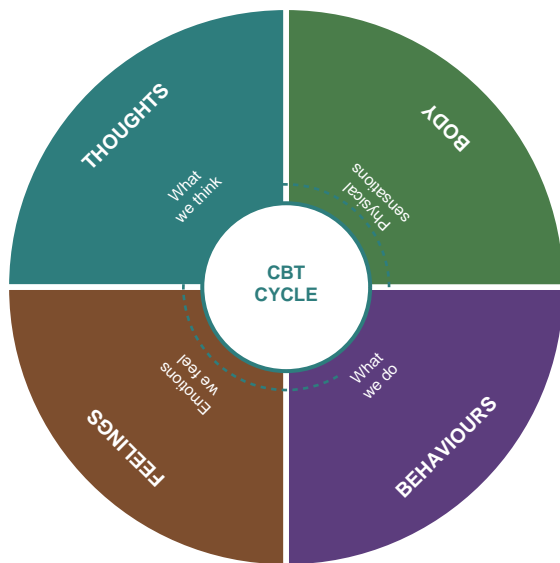


The CBT Cycle & Thinking Traps in Anxiety

Understanding how thoughts, feelings, body sensations, and behaviours connect — and the patterns that keep anxiety going.



How the CBT cycle works in anxiety

CBT is built on the idea that our **thoughts, feelings, body sensations** and **behaviours** are all connected — and each one influences the others.

In anxiety, this cycle becomes self-reinforcing. A worrying thought triggers physical sensations, which feel threatening, leading to avoidance — which keeps anxiety alive.

- **Thoughts** — predictions, worries, interpretations of danger
- **Feelings** — fear, dread, panic, unease, constant worry
- **Body** — tension, breathlessness, nausea, racing heart
- **Behaviours** — avoidance, reassurance-seeking, escape

Changing any one part of the cycle creates a ripple effect. CBT gives us tools to intervene at each point.

Common Thinking Traps in Anxiety

Thinking traps are automatic thought patterns that amplify anxiety. Recognising them is the first step to challenging them.

<p>■ Catastrophising Assuming the worst will happen. 'This headache must mean something is seriously wrong.' <i>Try: What is the most realistic outcome?</i></p>	<p>■ All-or-Nothing Seeing only extremes. 'If it's not perfect, it's a total failure.' <i>Try: What does the middle ground look like?</i></p>	<p>■ Mind Reading Assuming you know others' negative thoughts. 'They must think I'm incompetent.' <i>Try: Do I have actual evidence for this?</i></p>
<p>■ Fortune Telling Predicting a negative future as fact. 'I already know I'll mess this up.' <i>Try: Thoughts are not facts — what if it goes okay?</i></p>	<p>♥ Emotional Reasoning Treating feelings as truth. 'I feel like a burden, so I must be one.' <i>Try: What does the evidence actually say?</i></p>	<p>■ Mental Filter Focusing only on negatives, filtering out positives. Dwelling on one criticism despite ten compliments. <i>Try: What am I ignoring that gives a fuller picture?</i></p>
<p>■ Should Statements Rigid rules about how things 'must' be. 'I should be able to handle this.' <i>Try: Would I hold a friend to this standard?</i></p>	<p>■ Personalisation Blaming yourself for things outside your control. 'My friend is upset — it must be my fault.' <i>Try: What other factors might have contributed?</i></p>	

Quick Thought Challenge

1. Notice the thought	2. Name the trap	3. Find the evidence	4. Build a balanced thought	5. Notice the shift
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