

Anxiety

When your brain won't shut up

A teen-friendly guide to worry, panic, and getting through the moment.

Same you.
Braver you.
You've got this.

PROGRESS
NOT
PERFECTION

1 What anxiety can feel like

Anxiety can show up in your thoughts, body and behaviour. It can look different for everyone.



Thoughts (Your mind)

- Overthinking everything
- What if...?
- Trouble concentrating
- Negative or worst-case thoughts
- Zoning out or feeling disconnected

"My mind feels like a browser with too many tabs open."



Body feelings (Your body)

- Racing heart
- Stomach aches or nausea
- Tight chest
- Headaches
- Muscle tension
- Feeling shaky, hot or cold
- Trouble sleeping
- Feeling restless

Anxiety isn't in your head - it's in your whole body.



Behaviours (What you do)

- Avoiding things (people, places, tasks)
- Procrastinating
- Irritability or snapping at others
- Withdrawing or isolating
- Checking and reassuring over and over
- Zoning out or scrolling to escape

What if...?
What if...?
What if...?

You're not over-reacting. You're human.

2 What's happening

A closer look at what's going on in your brain and body.



Your brain is scanning for danger.

Your brain's amygdala (alarm system) is always looking for potential threats. It can misinterpret normal situations as dangerous.



Your stress response is activated.

When anxiety kicks in, your body releases stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline. This triggers the fight, flight or freeze response - even if the threat isn't real.



Anxiety is trying to protect you.

At its core, anxiety is a protective mechanism that wants to keep you safe. The problem is, it can get overly sensitive and go off when there's no real danger.

It's trying to keep you safe - even when there's no real danger.

Helpful but sometimes too loud.

It's not a character flaw. It's a nervous system doing its job.

3 What helps right now

When anxiety feels big, try these tools to calm your body and bring yourself back to the present.



Take a long exhale.

Try 4 in, 6 out. A longer exhale tells your nervous system it's safe.



Unclench your shoulders.

Notice the tension and let it go. Roll them gently or do a little shoulder shake.



Try 5-4-3-2-1.

Name 5 things you see, 4 you can touch, 3 you hear, 2 you smell, 1 you taste. It brings you to the present.



Use cold water.

Splash your face with cold water or hold an ice cube. It can quickly calm your nervous system.



Name one next step.

Don't try to solve everything. What's one small thing you can do right now?



Talk to someone.

A friend, family member, teacher, counsellor or someone you trust. You don't have to do this alone.

Breathe
You've got this.
One step at a time.

5 What not to believe

Let's bust some common anxiety myths.



Anxiety is not weakness.

It's a real mental health challenge, not a character flaw.



You are not broken.

Having anxiety doesn't mean there's something wrong with you.



You do not have to get rid of every anxious thought to function.

Thoughts are just thoughts - they don't always mean facts.



It's not all in your head.

Anxiety is real and valid, even if others don't always understand it.



You're not alone.

So many people feel this way, and support is available.

Your feelings are valid.

KINDER
BRAVER
MORE YOU

4 What helps over time

Small, consistent choices can make a big difference.



Get enough sleep.

Aim for 8-10 hours. A well-rested brain handles stress better.



Move your body.

Even a short walk, stretch or dance can reduce anxiety and boost your mood.



Be mindful with caffeine.

Too much caffeine can increase anxiety symptoms. Try balancing with water and notice how you feel.



Build routines.

Having a general routine can create a sense of safety and predictability.



Take breaks from doom scrolling.

Limit time on social media and news. Give your brain space to rest.



Consider therapy or support.

Talking to a counsellor can help you build tools, understand yourself better, and feel less alone.

Small steps add up to big change.

A calmer you is possible.

6 When to get extra help

It's important to reach out if you notice:



Panic attacks

Intense fear, physical symptoms, feeling overwhelmed or out of control.



Anxiety is making you miss school or avoid important activities.



You're not sleeping or eating because of anxiety.



Thoughts of self-harm or not wanting to be here

Reach out for help right away. You matter, and there are people who care and want to support you.

Reaching out is a sign of strength, not weakness.

You don't have to do this alone.