

ANXIETY COPING EXERCISES

If you experience anxiety then try these exercises to help you manage situations by breaking them into smaller events that you can mentally visualise and 'play out' before physically entering into the situation:-

1. **Identify the situation** (when it might happen, where would it take place, who are you with etc.).
2. **Consider how others cope in the situation** (ask them).
3. **Ask yourself 'can I do anything differently?'** (Is the situation avoidable or changeable in time, place or person?).

Using the situation above now proceed to:

1. **Positive Self Talk.** Use positive self talk. Tell yourself 'I can...I will' throughout the situation, whether 'playing out' or actually doing. Avoid negative self talk.
2. **Visualisation.** Use breathing techniques and positive self talk before physically entering a situation that you know causes anxiety or challenges your confidence. Visualise yourself succeeding and coping one step at a time. Break the situation into small manageable events e.g. if going to the supermarket challenges you to cope with crowds, lifting goods off shelves, placing items on the moving belt, getting cash from your purse and packing the bags etc. then visualise this mentally and break into small events (see Goal Setting and Action Planning). In the comfort of your own home, and using a mental image, take time to consider how and where potential problems may arise and then work out solutions. Build your confidence and lose that anxiety.

3. **Exposure.** Use positive self talk, visualisation and breathing techniques. Gradually introduce yourself to the situation and increase your exposure time as you are able until happy and confident with your position in the situation e.g. go to the shop at a quiet time, only purchase a few items that can easily be carried, have cash easy to reach in your pocket. Reflect on this experience and then visualise the next stage in the situation until you have built up your ability to cope by reducing your anxiety.

AVOIDING ANXIETY

(additional things to do)

1. **Time management.** Plan your day, prioritising activities and balance work, family and play!
2. **Physical exercise.** A good way to burn off adrenaline and improves physical well-being.
3. **Hobbies and Social Activities.** Useful as a distraction so choose something you enjoy!
4. **Worry Box.** Write down your worries and post them in a box. Do not worry about that problem until you can set aside time now and again to pull a paper out of the box and deal with it. You may find it is no longer a worry at all!

OTHER OPTIONS

- Make your own action plan. What would you like to achieve? Consider the obstacles, use visualisation and exposure.
- Be realistic. Don't set your goals too high and avoid too many changes all together.
- Talk over concerns with your family, partner, carer etc.
- Take a break. Pamper yourself – you deserve it!
- Sleep well. (see below)

SLEEPING WELL

- Use relaxation techniques.
- Keep to a regular pattern (going to bed and getting up).
- Comfortable bedroom (not full of stimulation e.g. TV/lighting).
- Bed and mattress.
- Regular exercise through the day.
- Avoid cat-napping in the day.
- Reduce caffeine in the evening.
- Reduce alcohol.
- Take your evening meal early on.
- Write down any troubles before you lay down to sleep.
- If you can't sleep then get up and do something relaxing e.g. read, music, milky drink.

FOR YOU TO DO

Fill this out whenever you feel 'anxious':-

Recognise your own triggers/what sets you off. (Is it an event? Is it a place? Is it a person?):

Effects on mind and body/how did you feel before, during and after the anxiety? (E.g. sweating, shaky, breathless, worried?):

Controlling the anxiety/what did you do? (E.g. relaxation exercises, visualization and exposure.):