



## EMPLOYEE SERIES

### Tips to managing anxiety

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**Anxiety is a normal response to a challenge, but it can become over developed.** Fear has helped us act quickly in response to danger, but nowadays most of our dangers are psychological, so we may feel anxious without a physical manifestation of what we are anxious about. This triggers our fight/flight response, we experience an urge to take action (often to get away). When we have excessive anxiety, our brain is tricked into believing we are in danger, when we are not. We increase our scanning of the environment, looking for danger e.g. worrying and smaller less significant elements can trigger our anxiety.
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**Disadvantages of anxiety.** Anxiety can become unhelpful when it is excessive, intrusive or persistent. It may feel uncontrollable and causes significant distress, or impair our capacity to function at an optimal level. We may find ourselves avoiding situations which makes us feel anxious, might find ourselves worrying or catastrophising a lot, or feeling tense, wound up and edgy.
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**Compassion.** We have a choice about how we experience our feelings. If we find the emotion uncomfortable we often try not to have it. Practice compassionately accepting our feelings – after all, uncomfortable as it might be, it is just a feeling that will eventually pass.
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**Accept uncertainty.** Implement a scheduled worry time for a specific time period. Accept that uncertainty is an unavoidable part of life. Identify what is changeable and accept that which you cannot.
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**Problem solving.** Focus on how one can effectively deal with a problem by identifying and defining the problem. Brainstorm ways of dealing with the problem and evaluate all possible solutions by examining the pros and cons for each option. Develop a plan of how best to deal with the situation. Then implement the plan, evaluate progress and be flexible towards making changes to achieve desired outcomes. A good plan will minimise the futile process of worrying.
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**Mindfulness.** Notice ones senses: what one sees; hears; tastes; smells; and touches. Notice breath, body sensations, thoughts and feelings. Practice being mindful of breathing, noticing any time the mind wanders away from the breath, catching its wandering, and redirecting it back to the breath as an anchor to the present moment.
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**Helpful thinking.** Start a 'Thought Diary' to record thought processes and future based predictions. Check the evidence to see how many of these things actually happen. Identify the best outcome, worst outcome and most likely scenario and determine how to cope in each scenario.
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**Look after your physical health.** Follow a healthy balanced diet and minimise caffeine, alcohol, sugar and sweeteners as they can increase anxiety. Get physically active to stimulate endorphins to feel good.