

# *Coping with worry, anxiety and stress*

Useful advice and tips

*because  
you matter*

**St Nicholas**  
Hospice Care

A Registered Charity No. 287773

**For an alternative format or  
language, please contact:**  
[enquiries@stnh.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@stnh.org.uk)

**Feeling worried or anxious is a natural response to situations that may be uncertain. It can affect how you cope in daily life. This leaflet has some tips and advice to help you understand anxiety and ways to manage these feelings.**

## **What is anxiety, worry and stress?**

People can experience different worries and anxieties. This can include a range of symptoms both psychological and physical. These are all normal symptoms and feelings.

### **Psychological symptoms include:**

- Feeling restless and irritable
- Easily distracted
- Difficulty concentrating
- Having a feeling of dread



### **Physical symptoms include:**

- Feeling tense
- Sweating
- Feeling dizzy
- Feeling short of breath
- Dry mouth
- Inability to sleep
- Digestive problems
- Feeling tired

## Tips for managing worry and anxiety

Experiencing worry and anxiety is not unusual, many people do, and there are a variety of ways you can help manage it:

- Try to identify what is making you feel anxious
- Focus on things you can control and enjoy doing
- Relaxation and Mindfulness
- Gentle exercise—walk around the garden or bed
- Chair based exercise
- Complementary therapy
- Talking therapy—the Psychological Support Team at the Hospice can help

## Breathing techniques for relaxation and breathlessness

Focusing on the breath out: Concentrate on slowly and fully exhaling, allowing your body to release tension.

Use a hand-held fan: Hold a small fan close to your face while breathing out to create a soothing, cooling effect.

Abdominal breathing: Place one hand on your abdomen and breathe deeply, ensuring that your abdomen rises as you inhale and falls as you exhale.

# Relaxation and mindfulness

Relaxation and mindfulness are important ways to help the body and mind relax. It can promote a sense of wellbeing, help manage anxiety, tension and anger, improve quality of sleep and reduce symptoms such as breathlessness, nausea, pain and fatigue.

Relaxation can help the mind to concentrate on different forms of focus, here are some examples.

## **Visualisation**

Imagining a beach, garden or a tranquil place.

## **Progressive muscle relaxation**

Starting at one end of the body and working through, relaxing the muscles to notice where we hold tension.

## **Focusing on numbers or colours**

Counting from 1-10 and 10-1, or moving through the colours of the rainbow.



## **Body scan**

Bring attention to different parts of our body to increase awareness and focus.

Mindfulness focuses on being in the present moment, the here and now.

A simple mindfulness technique could be to go into your garden for five minutes, pay attention to all the shades of green you see, then slowly move your attention to notice all the different sounds you can hear.

Or you could do this from indoors, paying attention to all the different colours you see around you, then the sounds you can hear from indoors and outdoors.

## What is a panic attack?

A panic attack is a more intense feeling of how you would normally respond to fear or worry. It is common and can be a very frightening feeling. A panic attack can consist of:

- Feeling like you can't breathe properly
- Sweating or shaking
- Heart beating fast or hard
- Chest or stomach pains
- Feeling sick, faint or dizzy



# How to manage a panic attack

## Grounding

Grounding is a simple quick technique that brings your focus to what is happening to you physically.

Place both feet firmly on the ground, notice both feet on the ground, feel the connection between your feet and the ground, focus on this and slowly breathe, the feeling of panic will pass.

Or find an object you can hold. You may have a favourite object or talisman that you can use. Pick it up and hold it, focus on just the object, noticing its colour, pattern, shape, its temperature, how does it feel. Continue holding your focus on the object and the feeling of panic will pass.



## **5-1 senses exercise**

This simple technique can be done wherever you are.

Start by noticing 5 things you can see, pay attention to each thing, say them out loud or silently in your head.

Then notice 4 things you can feel in your body, pay attention to each feeling and breathe.

Notice 3 things you can hear, focus on these, this could be the birds outside, or the radio in the background.

Notice 2 things you can smell, this could be dinner cooking or the smell of fresh cut grass.

Notice 1 thing you can taste, this could be your toothpaste, the meal you have just eaten, or just your breath. If you can't connect with a taste, just imagine a taste you enjoy.

***This feeling of panic will pass***

## Hospice **Advice line**

Call our 24/7 advice line for health care professionals and families if you need support with symptom management and end-of-life care.

[enquiries@stnh.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@stnh.org.uk)

[www.stnicholashospice.org.uk](http://www.stnicholashospice.org.uk)

**01284 766133**

## Your Experience **Survey**

We want to develop our services in response to feedback; please consider filling out our survey which is available online or can be requested in paper form.

[www.stnicholashospice.org.uk](http://www.stnicholashospice.org.uk)

[/your-experience-survey](http://www.stnicholashospice.org.uk/your-experience-survey)



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