

Coping with worry, anxiety and stress

Useful advice and tips

*because
you matter*

**St Nicholas
Hospice Care**

A Registered Charity No. 287773



Need to talk?

01284 766133

stnicholashospicecare.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 understand anxiety and ways to manage these feelings.



What is anxiety, worry and stress?

Range of symptoms

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 this symptom. Try and find some that are right for you.

- Try to identify what is making you feel worried or anxious
- Try to keep a focus on the things you can control and enjoy doing
- Breathing techniques – focus on the breath out, using a hand held fan, abdominal breathing. You may not experience breathlessness, but these techniques can help you to relax. Ask the Independent Living Team for more advice on these.
- Relaxation and Mindfulness – see the following section for more information
- Physical activity – gentle exercise, having a walk around the garden, bed or chair based exercise
- Complementary therapies such as a gentle hand massage
- Talking therapy – the Family Support Team at the Hospice can help

If you feel your anxiety is getting worse, speak to your healthcare team.



Relaxation and mindfulness

Relaxation and mindfulness is an important way to help the body and mind become relaxed and calm. It can promote a sense of wellbeing, help you to manage feelings of anxiety, tension and anger, help to improve the 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 such as:

Visualisation - of a beach, garden or tranquil place for you

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



A body scan - bringing attention to different parts of our body to increase awareness and focus



St Nicholas Hospice Care has recordings of these different types of relaxation for you to listen to, these are on our website and CD.

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. .



Completing a short daily relaxation or mindfulness technique can be very beneficial for the body and mind. It can take practice at first, but please ask your healthcare professional if you need more advice.

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 pounding
- 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, you can 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.

Get in touch

If you have any questions or for more advice, please contact the Independent Living Team or Family Support Team

01284 766133

enquiries@stnh.org.uk

www.stnicholashospicecare.org.uk



We offer a **24 hour telephone advice line**

01284 766133

for all patients and family members as well as healthcare professionals including general practitioners, district nurses and carers.

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This leaflet is intended to be used as a guide alongside advice given to you by your GP, Hospice doctors, nurses and physiotherapists. If you have any doubts or queries please speak to one of our clinicians. Further advice and information is also available from the team at St Nicholas Hospice Care.

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