

Surviving Anxiety

Anxiety is a normal response to a threat or danger. Although we all experience anxiety from time to time in response to particular circumstances, for some people it may persist and become intrusive, significantly undermining their quality of life. In extreme cases it can cause symptoms of sweating, dizziness or nausea as well as signs of autonomic arousal, such as abnormal breathing or a racing heart.

Anxiety is one of the most prevalent mental health conditions experienced in the UK. 1 in 10 will experience difficulties but far fewer will seek help, indeed the WHO suggests that the median time to seeking treatment after the onset of symptoms ranges from 3 – 30 years! While

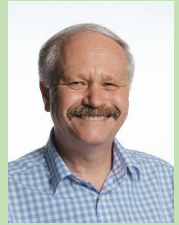
Nuance would always advocate seeking professional help, the following practical suggestions may help in the meantime.

“Today is the tomorrow you worried about yesterday and all is well.”

Dale Carnegie

Resources

- *Overcoming Anxiety* by Helen Kennerley (2014) Robinson, London. ISBN: 978-1-84901-878-4
- Anxiety UK is a charity with a helpline and many resources. www.anxietyuk.org.uk
- Headspace: Breathing exercises to reduce stress. www.headspace.com/meditation/breathing-exercises
- Craske MG, Stein MB (2016) Anxiety. *Lancet* **388**:3048-3059



Dr Paul Fairchild

- Reliance on tried and tested routines is especially important during periods of intense anxiety: there is comfort in familiarity
- Try to identify any triggers that induce anxiety to enable you to manage your exposure to them
- Look for cognitive biases that cause you to interpret events as though they were a threat: do you always assume the worst in any situation, even when it is not justified or rational to do so?
- Journaling has been shown to help those suffering from anxiety: keeping a daily record of your thoughts and feelings can give them expression and help contain them
- Mindfulness may also prove effective by helping you focus on the here and now rather than things that induce anxiety: consider investing in an App to help you, such as the one from *Headspace*
- Limit your access to news channels which can become compulsive and fuel, rather than alleviate, anxiety
- Reduce smoking and alcohol intake, since both may actively exacerbate anxiety. Likewise try to restrict your intake of caffeine which typically raises the heart rate and puts a person on edge
- Join a self help or online support group through a reputable organisation such as Anxiety UK
- Practise breathing exercises to reduce your heart rate and re-establish a sense of equilibrium
- Investigate additional relaxation techniques: typically, people find relief from stress when exercising, reading or listening to music
 - Meet with your GP to discuss whether medication may be beneficial