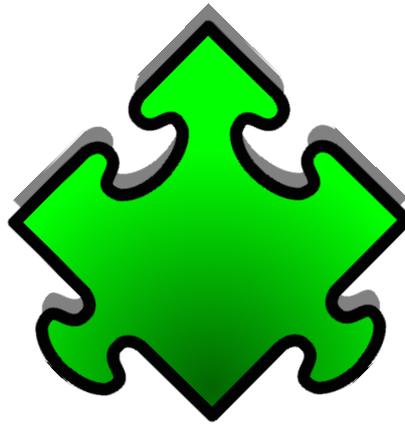


ANXIETY



So what is Anxiety?

Anxiety is a very natural response to when we think we are under some form of danger. We can feel it, have it taking over our thoughts and causing us to have physical reactions in our body. Anxiety can happen when we are worried about something that is about to happen or which we believe could happen in the future

Exam results, life changes, job interviews and loss etc. can create normal worried feelings or anxiety. The problem can become worse when it impacts on our life in such a way that we find it a problem living the way we would like. This can become a mental health concern when;

- Feelings of anxiety are very strong or last for a long time
- Fears or worries are out of balance with the situation
- We avoid situations that might cause us to feel anxious
- Worries feel very upsetting or are hard to control
- We regularly experience signs of anxiety, which could include panic attacks
- We find it hard to go about our everyday life or do things we enjoy.

It is not shocking to learn then that anxiety can also lead to self-harm and often occurs during times of anger, misery, fear, worry, [depression](#) or low self-esteem in order to manage or control their negative feelings.

Anxiety Types.

Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) - can affect you by making everyday things seem really difficult.

Panic Attacks – These attacks can last anywhere between 10 & 20 minutes and are greater feelings of anxiety. The feelings will gradually lessen but could leave you feeling quite shaken.

Phobia – This can be feelings of panic that may not seem dangerous or bothersome to others but can leave you feeling quite scared and nervous i.e. spiders, feathers or being sick.

Have you heard of the Fight, Flight and Freeze responses? No, well here goes!

So what is the 'fight, flight or freeze' (FFF) response? I guess it's like being very sensitive to make us more 'superhuman'! It's a natural feeling and one we can't do without.

Like all animals, we human beings have developed ways to help us protect ourselves from danger. When we sense danger, our bodies react by releasing certain chemicals we call hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol. These hormones:

- make us feel more alert, so we can act faster
- it also makes our hearts beat faster, quickly sending blood to where it's needed most.

After we feel the danger has passed, our bodies release other hormones to help our muscles relax and this can sometimes cause us to shake and shiver.

This is called the 'fight, flight or freeze' response – it's something that happens automatically in our bodies, and we have no control over it.

So let's take each of the Fight, Flight and Freeze responses so that we can understand their purpose;

1. **Fight** – As human beings we have developed the fight response so that we are ready to take down anything big and scary. If you're attacked by a wild animal, you might have to be ready to fight it! This response helps you to focus and give your muscles oxygen so that they can fight. This response might make you overly aggressive in situations that aren't really threatening.
2. **Flight** - Again we have developed a flight instinct when presented with a scary thing such as the wild animal above in order to keep ourselves safe! When we face something that could actually harm us, this instinct helps to alert you so that running away might keep you safe.
3. **Freeze** - The freeze response allows us to quickly judge a dangerous situation. It gives us time to decide to fight or run away. When a hunted animal has been caught and feels helpless, it freezes in order to pretend it is dead, which might give it an opportunity to escape. Likewise, people with social anxiety might feel helpless while interacting with other people, so they freeze to decide what to do next or to not draw attention to themselves.

However, in this day and age the problem with anxiety becoming a mental health concern is when it impacts on your ability to live your life as fully as you want to. The FFF responses can be triggered too readily even when there is no life threatening situations and can become over sensitive to our view of what danger is.

So what can you do to help yourself?

- Ask yourself “What would I tell a friend in this situation?” Asking this question will help you to view the situation factually, instead of through an emotional state of being.
- Even asking others for advice might give you viewpoints that you haven’t considered before.
- Get help...managing these strong physical responses might seem too difficult to do on your own? If so, speak to your GP, or seek some counselling with a professional trained in offering you the support that you need.
- Take a few deep breaths. Deep breathing stimulates something called the ‘vagus’ nerve in your brain and will help to relax you. It will give you time and space to process what is actually happening.

RESOURCES

College Counselling Service – 01226 216 233

IAPT Services - 01226 216 233

Therapy for Anxiety, Depression & Stress (TADS) 01226 872 120

MIND Barnsley – 01226 211 188

<https://www.mind.org.uk/>

Living Life to the Full Dr Chris Williams (interactive self-help);

http://lltff.com/index.php?section=page&page_seq=20