



# Resource Library

## Anxiety Reset Series August 2024



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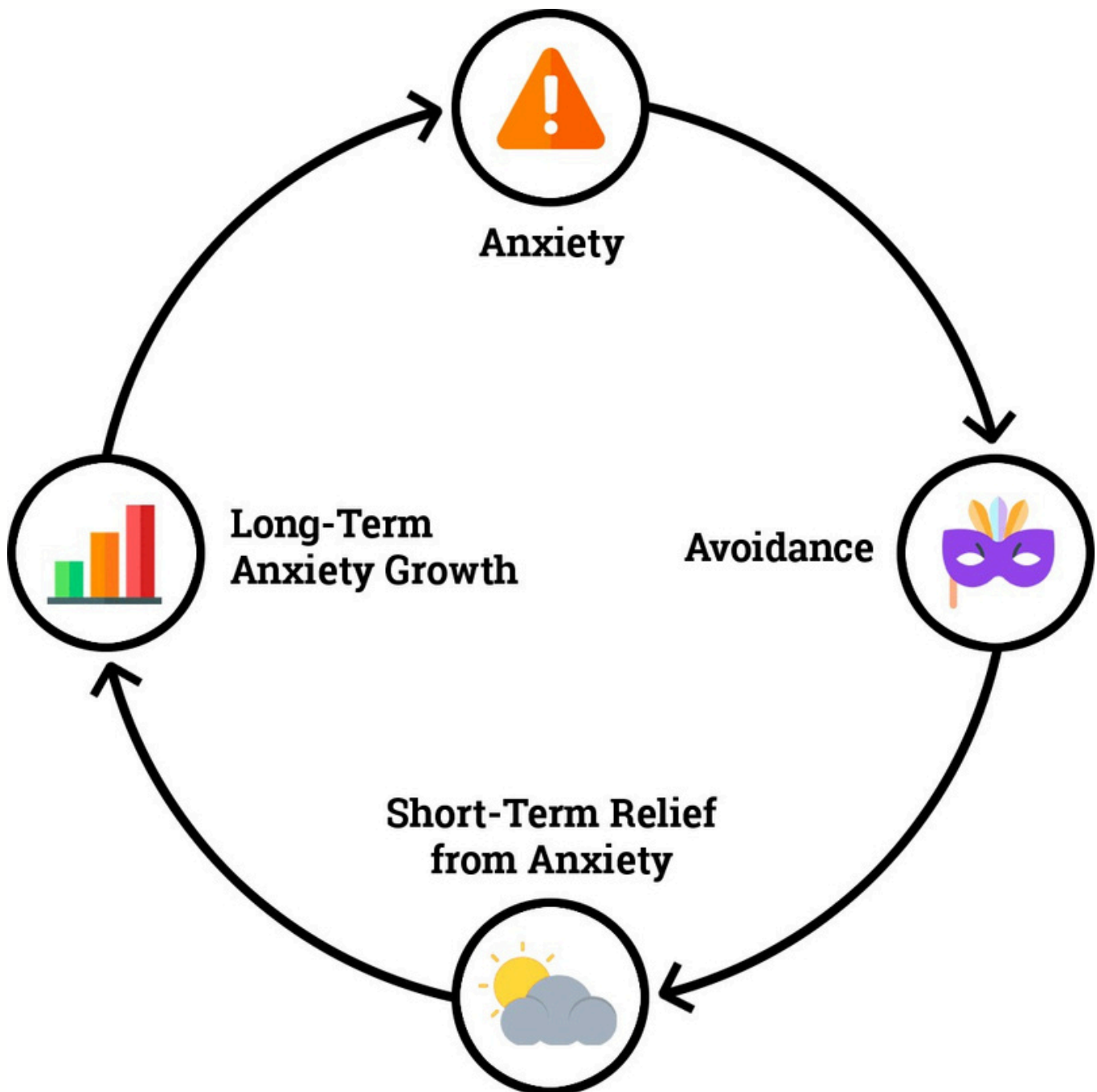
Derby City Council

Supporting carers and their families throughout Derby City

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# Cycle of Anxiety



# Cycle of Anxiety



## ANXIETY

An anxiety-producing situation leads to uncomfortable symptoms such as worry, fear, a racing heart, sweating, or a feeling of being overwhelmed.

## AVOIDANCE



Uncomfortable symptoms are controlled by avoiding the anxiety producing situation. Examples of avoidance include:

- Skipping class/calling in sick to avoid giving a presentation
- Using drugs or alcohol to numb feelings
- Procrastinating on challenging tasks



## SHORT TERM RELIEF FROM ANXIETY

Avoidance of the anxiety-producing situation gives an immediate sense of relief. The symptoms of anxiety lessen, but only temporarily.

## LONG TERM ANXIETY GROWTH



The fear that initially led to avoidance worsens, and the brain learns that when the anxiety-producing situation is avoided, the symptoms go away. As a result, the symptoms of anxiety will be worse the next time, and avoidance is more likely.

# Coping Skills - Anxiety

## DEEP BREATHING

Deep breathing is a simple technique that's excellent for managing emotions. Not only is deep breathing effective, it's also discreet and easy to use at any time or place.



- Sit comfortably and place one hand on your abdomen.
- Breathe in through your nose, deeply enough that the hand on your abdomen rises.
- Hold the air in your lungs, and then exhale slowly through your mouth, with your lips puckered as if you are blowing through a straw.
- The secret is to go slow: Time the inhalation (4s), pause (4s), and exhalation (6s). Practice for 3 to 5 minutes.

# Coping Skills - Anxiety

## PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

By tensing and relaxing the muscles throughout your body, you can achieve a powerful feeling of relaxation. Additionally, progressive muscle relaxation will help you spot anxiety by teaching you to recognize feelings of muscle tension.

Sit back or lie down in a comfortable position. For each area of the body listed below, you will tense your muscles tightly, but not to the point of strain. Hold the tension for 10 seconds, and pay close attention to how it feels. Then, release the tension, and notice how the feeling of relaxation differs from the feeling of tension.

**FEET** - Curl your toes tightly into your feet, then release them.

**CALVES** - Point or flex your feet, then let them relax.

**THIGHS** - Squeeze your thighs together tightly, then let them relax.

**TORSO** - Suck in your abdomen, then release the tension and let it fall.

**BACK** - Squeeze your shoulder blades together, then release them.

**SHOULDERS** - Lift and squeeze your shoulders toward your ears, let them drop.

**ARMS** - Make fists and squeeze them toward your shoulders, let them drop.

**HANDS** - Make a fist by curling your fingers into your palm, then relax your fingers.

**FACE** - Scrunch your facial features to the center of your face, then relax.

**FULL BODY** - Squeeze all muscles together, then release all tension.

# Coping Skills - Anxiety

## CHALLENGING IRRATIONAL THOUGHTS

Anxiety can be magnified by irrational thoughts. For example, the thoughts that “something bad will happen” or “I will make a mistake” might lack evidence, but still have an impact on how you feel. By examining the evidence and challenging these thoughts, you can reduce anxiety.

- **Put thoughts on trial:** Choose a thought that has contributed to your anxiety. Gather evidence in support of your thought (*verifiable facts only*), and against your thought. Compare the evidence and determine whether your thought is Put thoughts on trial.
- **Use Socratic questioning:** Question the thoughts that contribute to your feelings of anxiety. Ask yourself:

**“Is my thought based on facts or feelings?”**

**“How would my best friend see this situation?”**

**“How likely is it that my fear will come true?”**

**“What’s *most likely* to happen?”**

**“If my fear comes true, will it still matter in a week/month/year?”**

# Using Imagery

**Your thoughts have the power to change how you feel. If you think of something sad, it's likely you'll start to feel sad. The opposite is also true: When you think of something positive and calming, you feel relaxed. The imagery technique harnesses this power to reduce anxiety.**

Think of a place that you find comforting. It could be a secluded beach, your bedroom, a quiet mountaintop, or even a loud concert. For 5 to 10 minutes, use all your senses to imagine this setting in great detail. Don't just think fleetingly about this place--really imagine it.



What do you see around you? What do you notice in the distance? Look for small details you would usually miss.



What sounds can you hear? Are they soft or loud? Listen closely to everything around you. Keep listening to see if you notice any distant sounds.



Are you eating or drinking something enjoyable? What is the flavor like? How does it taste? Savor all the tastes of the food or drink.



What can you feel? What is the temperature like? Think of how the air feels on your skin, and how your clothes feel on your body. Soak in all these sensations.



What scents are present? Are they strong or faint? What does the air smell like? Take some time to appreciate the scents.



# Positive Affirmations

Over the years, we tend to get into unhelpful thinking habits and can think negatively about ourselves and situations. Using positive statements can help us develop a new attitude to ourselves and our situations.

Choose a statement from those below, or make one that means more to you, and repeat, repeat, repeat throughout the day, every day, of every week, of every month. This repetition helps rewire the neural pathways in our brains.

You might want to make or print out a card with your affirmation, and carry it with you. For the positive affirmations to work, you must use it whenever you notice you have that negative thought – immediately turn it around by using your affirmation.

Use a statement that starts with “I” and use the present tense. See the examples below – choose one, adapt one, or make up your own. Make it something broadly realistic even if you don’t believe it right now.

- **I am determined and successful**
- **I have strength**
- **I am moving towards my goals**
- **I have many options and can make wise decisions**
- **I live a healthy and positive lifestyle**
- **I have a lot to be proud of**
- **I am a unique and special person**
- **I am a good and worthwhile person**
- **I care about others, I am needed and worthwhile**
- **I am confident and competent**
- **I am in control of my choices**
- **All is well, right here, right now**