



OSBORNE CAWKWELL
PRIVATE TUITION



Anxiety is a term used to describe intense feelings of fear, panic or worry.

We all get anxious at times, but an anxiety disorder is different from normal anxiety in that it is more severe and continues even after the “trigger” has been removed. The biggest trigger in young people is stress, although it can also be caused by environmental factors, such as an unhappy home life or unhealthy relationships.

Although unpleasant, anxiety is related to the ‘fight or flight’ response – a normal biological reaction to perceived danger – and can be controlled.

Statistics:

- 📍 In 2013, there were 8.2 million cases of anxiety in the UK
- 📍 Women are almost twice as likely to be diagnosed with an anxiety disorder as men

General symptoms:

Anxiety can manifest itself in a number of ways:

- 📍 **Physical effects:** Dry mouth/difficulty swallowing, fast or pounding heart, trembling or sweating, feeling faint or dizzy, shortness of breath.

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- 🕒 **Psychological effects:** Fearing that something “terrible” is going to happen, difficulty concentrating or remembering details, mind racing or going blank, feeling constantly on edge, restlessness.
- 🕒 **Behavioural effects:** An overwhelming desire to ‘escape’ situations that cause discomfort, compulsive behaviour (e.g. excessive checking, overthinking), fear of social situations or avoidance of certain situations.

Treatment for Anxiety:

Initially, it is recommended that you pay a visit to your local GP. From here, they will carry out an assessment, and based on the results will prescribe either one or both of the following:

- 🕒 **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)** – It can often be difficult to identify what the triggers are. CBT can help identify these and change any negative thought patterns associated with them by challenging the individual to look at their situation in a different way.
- 🕒 **Medication** – Typically a Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitor (SSRI). This works to increase the amount of serotonin available in the brain which can have great success in helping to relieve some of the common symptoms of anxiety. However, it can also have unwanted side effects and may take a while to get the right dose.

There are also a number of **self-help strategies** to try if someone is struggling with anxiety:

- 🕒 **Mindfulness/Breathing exercises** – Mindfulness has been proven to help not only prevent anxiety attacks, but also manage them when they happen. The “balloon exercise” is a popular breathing technique used to help calm nerves. Have the person breathe out slowly and steadily as if they were blowing up a balloon. Then breathe in as if they were sucking that air back in. Ask them to repeat this process for a few minutes, or until the feelings of anxiety have subsided.
- 🕒 **Educate them about anxiety** – Explain that it’s just a normal biological process that happens when the fight or flight response is activated. In the past this would have been useful in helping us to detect and respond to danger, but in the modern world it can be triggered unnecessarily.



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Rather than trying to fight it, encourage them to become curious about it. Ask them where they feel anxiety in their body; get them to describe how it feels. The goal is to try and bring them out of their heads and back into their bodies, which will calm them down and deactivate the fight or flight response.

Q Diet – Caffeine, alcohol and smoking have been known to exacerbate symptoms, so a good starting point would be to eliminate these.

In terms of diet, cutting out junk food and sugar and replacing them with meals consisting of lean meats, leafy green vegetables and whole grains can be greatly beneficial in reducing symptoms of anxiety. We recommend [Rachel Kelly's book "The Happy Kitchen"](#) which has some fantastic recipes. Some people may even have underlying digestive disorders, such as leaky gut, or food sensitivities, so it could be worth getting some tests done or doing an elimination diet to see if symptoms improve.

Q Exercise – This is very useful as it burns off excess adrenaline in the body and lowers stress levels, helping to release endorphins. Even a brisk walk of 30 to 60 minutes can have the same effect on anxiety as going to the gym. So it is highly recommended to get some form of physical movement everyday, preferably outside in nature if possible.

Further information:

[Anxiety UK](#)

Charity providing support for those who have been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder.
Tel: 08444 775 774

[MIND](#)

One of the largest mental health charities around. Offers extensive information and advice on a variety of mental health issues.
Tel: 0300 123 3393

[Childline](#)

Free 24hr helpline for children and young people in the UK.
Tel: 0800 1111