

Stress/Anxiety

- ▶ Worrying is the process of imagining the worst and creates the emotion of anxiety.
- ▶ Separate the things that you can do something about from the things you cannot do anything about.
- ▶ What is the point of worrying about the things you cannot do anything about.
- ▶ Visualise what you can do if something does happen, what will you do if..... your exam doesn't go as well as you wanted or if you don't get the exam grade you hoped for, explore your options.

Stress/Anxiety

- ▶ **Remember: This Too Shall Pass**
- ▶ Homework is piling up, you have an assessment tomorrow and mum wants you to do the washing up. No one managing their own life is devoid of stress and too much of it can lead to excessive worry, nervousness, dread, upset stomach, or difficulty breathing. The first step to overcoming such negative feelings is to recognise that you are experiencing a very common emotional state most commonly identified as anxiety. Although it's uncomfortable, the negative feelings WILL PASS. Fighting the anxiety can make it stronger. Paradoxically, accepting that you are feeling anxious helps activate the body's natural relaxation response.

Stress/Anxiety – Fight/Flight

- ▶ Imagine walking down a path only to be greeted by a snarling grizzly bear - or worse a teacher asking you for your homework. When we are faced with an anxiety-inducing situation, our body's nervous system automatically triggers physiological changes. Our breathing quickens, adrenaline is secreted, and our heart begins to race. This natural survival mechanism - called the fight or flight response - is intended to help us to escape a true, life threatening emergency. However, when the threat is imagined (e.g. I'm going to mess up this presentation and everyone will know I'm a fraud) the fight/flight response is unnecessary and very uncomfortable.

Stress/Anxiety – Self Soothing

▶ **Breathing**

- ▶ One of the most effective ways to activate the relaxation response is by decreasing the heart rate. Since we can't voluntarily alter our pulse, more tangible measures are needed. Luckily, a rapid heart rate can be lowered with deep breathing techniques.
- ▶ 4 7 8 technique. 1) Exhale completely through your mouth. 2) Close your mouth and inhale through your nose for a mental count of **four**. 3) Hold your **breath** for a count of seven. 4) Exhale completely through your mouth for a count of eight.

Stress/Anxiety - Positive Self-Talk

- ▶ If a friend told you they were nervous about their exams what would you say? Unless you're really unkind things like "you're such a dumb little kid" or "you should be nervous because no one will like you" are things you wouldn't say. This is because we intuitively know how to help others combat stress sometimes better than ourselves. To increase emotional comfort, it's imperative to practice reassuring and realistic self-talk. When you are anxious practice self-talk phrases e.g:
 - ▶ "This feeling will pass."
 - ▶ "I will get through this."
 - ▶ "I am safe right now."
 - ▶ "I am feeling anxious now, but I have the power make myself calm."
 - ▶ "I can feel my heart rate slowing down."

Stress/Anxiety – Relaxation

- ▶ Stress causes our muscles to tighten and become tense. To increase a relaxed state and physical comfort, tighten and release muscles beginning with the largest muscle group.
- ▶ Work around the body one main muscle area at a time. Whilst doing this breathe deeply, calmly and evenly.
- ▶ Clench the muscle tightly, hold for a few seconds then relax the muscle completely.

Stress/Anxiety - Diet

- ▶ What we eat and drink largely impacts our emotional state. Foods most associated with exacerbating anxiety are ones containing caffeine, sugar and alcohol. Even consumed in small amounts, studies have found that the stimulating effects of caffeine can cause anxiety, trigger panic attacks, and increase feelings of nervousness and irritability. Caffeine also causes physical symptoms such as trembling and shaking.
- ▶ Sugar acts as an adrenal stimulant and can cause anxiety or panic attacks.
- ▶ Similarly, although alcohol is thought of as something to "take the edge off" it dehydrates the body and ultimately increases anxiety.

Stress/Anxiety – Get Moving

- ▶ **Exercise, Exercise, Exercise!!**
- ▶ Most of us know that exercise is good for our physical health. Exercise is nature's anti-anxiety remedy. Besides clearing the mind and helping you sleep better maintaining a regular exercise routine has been proven to reduce stress, improve mood, enhance self-esteem and increase energy levels. During exercise, the body releases chemicals called endorphins which interact with receptors in the brain causing euphoric feelings and reduction in physical pain.

Stress/Anxiety - Sleep

- ▶ **Get More Sleep**
- ▶ Put a sleep/night time routine in place.
 - Avoid going on phones/tablets etc. late at night.
 - Have some relaxing time before bed.
 - Try reading before bed.
 - Avoid caffeine.
- ▶ For tips on how to increase your Zzzzzs look at the National Sleep Foundation website.