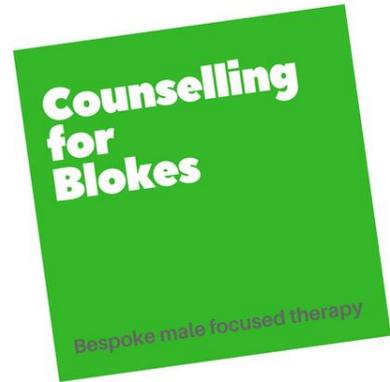


Need an anxiety toolkit?



By Nathan Fox

Anxiety and panic attacks are more common than you think. Figures from the Office for National Statistics state that on average 20% of the UK population say they have suffered with high anxiety. That's just over 12 million people. You are not alone.

Anxiety is related to the fight or flight response, which is an automatic human reaction to dangerous situations, we have no control over it. Once the danger has passed your body relaxes and the anxiety subsides. When anxiety starts to take over your life and has an impact upon your daily routine then it can become a problem.

So how do we deal with anxiety?

Start by talking to someone you trust - if 12 million people are struggling, the odds are that you will know someone who understands what you are going through. Sharing your issue won't solve it, but will help to relieve the pressure.

Take control of your breathing - focus on your breath instead of what is causing your anxiety. Take deep and slow breaths. Focus on relaxing your body

Try shifting your focus away – use techniques to help, such as:

TLC. Wherever you are, concentrate on finding all of the textures (T), then the lines (L) and lastly the colours (C) that you can notice. It may sound a bit strange, but once you have spent five minutes trying it, your focus will have switched.

STOP, this stands for **S**top, **T**ake a breath, **O**bserve what is going on, both inside and outside of your body and **P**ull back. This may mean that you need to remove yourself from the situation and regroup, or taking a step back away from your emotions and looking at the situation from a more logical point of view. What advice would you give someone in that situation? And the classic count to 10.

Sleep! - Get a good night's sleep. It's super important. Sleep is how our brain resets for the next day. Try relaxation before you go to sleep. Something like a body scan whilst you're lying in bed can have an impact – close your eyes and focus on your body, starting from your toes and working up to your head, relaxing each part as you go.

Try reassuring yourself – you can only do your best, if you're not on top form, say you're ill or haven't slept, there is little chance that you will be able to cope with everything that the world will throw at you. So stop beating yourself up – you can't control everything.

Positive attitude – try to focus on the positives. Look for them, however little they might be. We all need to think positively, as humans can spend too much time focused on the negative. We need to reprogram ourselves to see the positive and frame the day around that. Finding a balance between anxiety and positivity can help to bring clarity to a situation where before there was only negativity.

Physical exercise - stay healthy, it has been proven that physical exercise helps lift mood and combat depression, limit caffeine and alcohol as both are linked to increased anxiety. Eat well, our bodies need regular healthy foods to sustain itself and feed the brain.

Keep a diary – not everyone likes doing this, me included, but it is very helpful. Log the days that you found hard, ask yourself why? What were the triggers? Location? Something someone said? Something you saw or smelt? This will help with the next step.

Learn your triggers – get to know them so you can prepare yourself. Get a plan in place. Is it always in the cheese aisle in Tesco that your chest gets tight because there are too many people, too much choice. Once you are aware of that you have something to work on and can build a plan.

Take time out - listen to music you love, relax, meditate; if that's your thing. Maybe try sport, or meet your mates for a chat and a pint. Experiment, you might just find your new passion in life.

Find support – lastly get a support network in place. This is easier to do with help. Other people might be able to see things that you cannot and help you past barriers. Mind, The NHS or therapy are all good options for further specialised help.

So go forth and be brave. Start small, make one change and let your new life grow from there..