



Alleviate Anxiety

Dr. Vicki Uwannah

DR VICKI UWANNAH PSYCHOLOGIST

Dr Vicki Uwannah is a chartered Counselling Psychologist based in London, registered by the British Psychological Society and the Health and Care Professions Council.

Vicki is passionate about helping people have a better relationship with themselves and others by growing in self-awareness. Having worked in the NHS and private sector for over 10 years, her breadth of experience has covered working with individuals at all stages of their lifespan, as well as more specialist areas such as relational work with couples and families, schools and corporate environments.

Despite working in varying client groups and organisations, her aim remains the same; to offer clarity, compassion and understanding in order to propel her clients towards change.

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Are you someone that lives with anxiety every day? Do your worries get in the way of you enjoying life? Do your plans get unexpectedly sidetracked by anxiety triggers or panic attacks?

Perhaps things you used to be able to handle are starting to feel like a struggle.

Welcome to **Alleviate Anxiety in 21 Days** - If you have been struggling with anxiety then this program is for you.

My name is Dr Vicki Uwannah. I'm a Psychologist and Grokker mind expert. I have designed this series to help you better understand and manage anxiety.

Over the course of the next 21 days, I will teach you short and effective Cognitive Behavioral Therapy techniques to help you identify and change unhelpful thinking patterns that contribute to anxiety.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy has been shown to be extremely effective in treating anxiety and over the course of this series, you will learn techniques for overcoming catastrophic thinking, disrupting unhelpful thought patterns, managing panic attacks and changing behaviours that keep you stuck in your zone of comfort.

I will also share with you a number of relaxation techniques to help you feel grounded, relaxed and calm.

At just 3-5 minutes per day for each session, this program is designed to fit seamlessly into your busy schedule.

While your journey with anxiety may last more than 21 days, this program will give you the tools and techniques you need to make positive changes in the direction of a life that is free from anxiety.

Dr. Vicki

HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

This workbook is designed to accompany the video program, but can also be used on its own. It can be helpful to use both together in order to ensure you practice and fully understand the key learnings of each lesson and exercise. The program has been designed for you to complete one short session per day over 21 consecutive days. However, if you take longer to complete the program that is also fine. You will find a summary of the key learnings at the end of this guidebook which you can go back and review.

The workbook and videos come in two different formats. “**Education**” lessons focus on teaching you to understand anxiety, your thinking, and strategies to overcome anxiety. “**Exercises**” are interactive, and ask you to actively reflect or visualize in order to practice the strategies you’ve learned.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Over the next 21 days, you will be introduced to a number of new concepts and ways of understanding anxiety. If at first you don’t understand an exercise, or grasp the meaning of a practice you can repeat the exercise via the audio guide or in this workbook. You can also connect with Dr. Vicki and share your feedback and questions in the comments section underneath each video.



WHAT IS ANXIETY?

Anxiety is a feeling of worry, nervousness or distress when you perceive a threat or think of problems that may arise in the future.

There are many different types of anxiety conditions and different people experience them in different ways.

One of the most common anxiety conditions is known as **Generalised Anxiety Disorder**. Generalised anxiety disorder (or GAD) is a type of anxiety disorder that is defined by an uncontrollable and persistent worry that affects day-to-day life on an ongoing basis.

You may be dealing with generalised anxiety disorder if you've experienced any of the following symptoms frequently over the past 6 months or longer:

- Constant worry about many different things
- Your worry makes doing everyday things feel less enjoyable
- Feeling tired often but struggle to sleep
- Feeling tense or restless
- Difficulty concentrating
- Becoming irritated easily
- Feeling physically tense in your body often



If you have been struggling with many or all of these symptoms for a long time, you may feel powerless, disheartened or even skeptical that things could ever change for you.

Throughout this series you will learn a range of coping strategies to help you better manage and alleviate your experience of anxiety.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE ANXIETY?

Anxiety is a general term for a range of feelings, including fear, apprehension and worry, that can be mild or severe. A defining feature of anxiety is a self-reinforcing loop of symptoms that can exacerbate and prolong feelings of anxiety - this is often referred to as '**the vicious cycle of anxiety**'.

Here is a real-world example of this 'vicious cycle of anxiety':

Tom has a fear of flying and starts to feel anxious just thinking about getting on an aeroplane for an upcoming trip. This leads to physical symptoms such as rapid heartbeat, sweating, and shaking. These physical symptoms cause Tom to worry more and they fear that they may have a panic attack during the flight. These thoughts and feelings become so overwhelming that Tom decides to avoid flying altogether and cancels their trip away. Tom has another trip coming up later in the year and he contemplates how he might be able to avoid this trip also.

Can you relate to this scenario?

When anxiety becomes **excessive, persistent, and interferes with daily life**, it may be a sign of an anxiety disorder, a mental health condition that requires treatment. This is the main difference between **feeling anxious** at times and having an **anxiety condition**.

Throughout this series we'll learn many tools and coping strategies that may be useful for managing generalised anxiety disorder. However, if your symptoms are severe and you are having trouble coping, I would advise that you seek individualised clinical advice.



WHAT ARE THE CAUSES OF ANXIETY?

The exact cause of anxiety or anxiety conditions like Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) is not fully understood, but it is believed to be the result of a combination of genetic, environmental and biological factors.

Some common factors that may contribute to the development of anxiety include genetics, brain chemistry, chronic stress traumatic life experiences and chronic medical conditions. Research has also shown that substance abuse, particularly the abuse of alcohol or drugs, can worsen anxiety symptoms and increase the risk of developing more serious anxiety disorders.

There is also lots of research on how certain lifestyle factors contribute to the development or worsening of anxiety symptoms. These include:

1. **Poor sleep:** Lack of sleep, or poor quality sleep, can increase anxiety levels and make it more difficult to manage stress.
2. **Substance abuse:** Substance abuse, including alcohol and drug use, can trigger anxiety and worsen existing symptoms.
3. **Poor diet:** A diet that is high in sugar and processed foods and low in nutrients can contribute to anxiety.
4. **Lack of physical activity:** Regular physical activity has been shown to reduce anxiety and improve mood.
5. **Caffeine intake:** Caffeine is a stimulant that can increase anxiety levels, especially in people who are sensitive to it.
6. **Chronic stress:** Chronic stress can contribute to the development of anxiety and worsen existing symptoms.
7. **Social isolation:** Lack of social support and isolation can trigger anxiety and make it more difficult to manage stress.

If you have identified that you experience anxiety, I would encourage you to review each of the lifestyle factors listed above and assess if there are any simple lifestyle changes you can start to make today.

HOW CAN CBT HELP WITH ANXIETY?

Cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) is a form of psychotherapy that has been shown to be effective in treating anxiety disorders, including **Generalized Anxiety Disorder** (GAD). It is a form of psychotherapy that is based on the idea that the way we think (cognition) and the things we do (behaviour) affect how we feel emotionally. The goal of CBT is to help individuals identify and challenge negative or distorted thoughts and beliefs, and to learn more adaptive and effective ways of thinking and behaving.

Here are some of the ways in which CBT helps with anxiety:

1. **Identifying negative thoughts:** CBT helps to identify and challenge negative thoughts and beliefs that contribute to anxiety, such as "I can't handle this situation" or "I'm going to fail."
2. **Replacing negative thoughts with positive ones:** CBT teaches us to replace negative thoughts with more positive and realistic ones. For example, instead of thinking "I can't handle this situation," an individual might learn to think "I've faced difficult situations before and I can handle this one too."
3. **Gradual exposure:** CBT often involves gradually exposing a person to the things they are afraid of, in a controlled and safe environment, to help reduce anxiety.
4. **Relaxation techniques:** CBT may also teach relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing and progressive muscle relaxation, to help individuals manage anxiety in the moment.
5. **Improving coping skills:** CBT helps develop coping skills for managing stress and anxiety in everyday life.

By the end of this series, you will be armed with a number of useful CBT tools and techniques that you can use on your own. However, if you do feel you would benefit from visiting a qualified therapist this may also be a helpful step.

IDENTIFY UNHELPFUL THOUGHT PATTERNS

Thoughts are mental cognitions. They are our ideas, opinions, and beliefs about ourselves and the world around us. We all have our own individual styles and patterns of thinking that are shaped by our past experiences and unique perspectives.

"Unhelpful thought patterns" refer to negative and irrational thought patterns that contribute to emotional distress, anxiety, depression and other psychological problems. These thought patterns are characterised by extreme and rigid thinking and a tendency to selectively focus on negative information while ignoring positive information.

Here are some common examples of unhelpful thought patterns:

1. **All-or-nothing thinking:** Viewing events or experiences in black-and-white terms, with no middle ground. For example, thinking "I'm a failure because I didn't get that job."
2. **Overgeneralization:** Drawing broad conclusions based on one or two events or experiences. For example, "I failed this test, so I'm a failure."
3. **Mental filtering:** Focusing exclusively on negative aspects of a situation, while ignoring positive aspects. For example, "I had a great day, but I got stuck in traffic for an hour, so the whole day was ruined."
4. **Mind reading:** Assuming you know what other people are thinking or feeling without any evidence. For example, "He didn't say hello, so he must be mad at me."
5. **Fortune-telling:** Predicting the future negatively without any evidence. For example, "I'll never get that job, so there's no point in even applying."
6. **Catastrophizing:** thinking of the worst-case scenario that may happen in the future

IDENTIFY UNHELPFUL THOUGHT PATTERNS

Do any of these unthoughtful thinking patterns resonate with you? If so, it could be helpful to review this list again in your own time and identify which of these types of thinking styles seems to regularly occur in your life.

You can find a full list of these ‘unhelpful thinking patterns’ in the PDF guide that accompanies this series.

Unhelpful thought patterns contribute to anxiety by causing a person to worry excessively and perceive threats that may not actually exist.

While thoughts are shaped by life experiences, genetics, and education, they are generally under conscious control. In other words, if you are aware of your thoughts and attitudes, you can choose to change them.

By challenging and replacing these unhelpful thought patterns with more realistic and helpful ones, it becomes possible to reduce anxiety and improve one’s overall mental well-being.



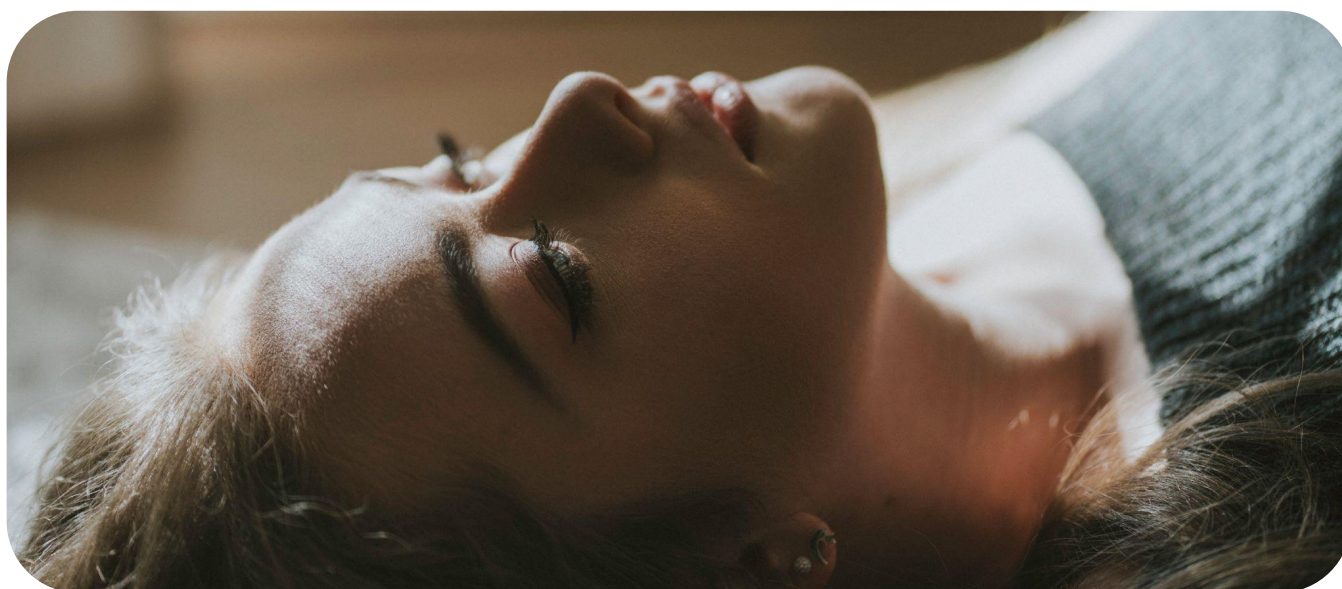
CHALLENGE NEGATIVE THOUGHTS

It can be so easy for us to believe the script or stories going on in our mind, simply because we've heard them repeatedly or we haven't given ourselves an opportunity to challenge them. A lot of the time we find that when we pay close attention to what we're thinking, they're usually beliefs that aren't entirely rational or realistic.

Today I will guide you through an exercise that will help you to challenge your negative thoughts by **'taking them to court'**.

'Taking your thoughts to court' refers to the process of examining and challenging your own thoughts and beliefs in a critical and objective manner. It means to question and analyze your thoughts, beliefs, and assumptions as if you were presenting evidence in a court of law. Typically in a courtroom, the opposing sides will present evidence to support their claim. This evidence is needed for the jury to inform their decision on a verdict. We're going to do the same with our negative thoughts.

By taking your thoughts to court, you are essentially engaging in a form of self-reflection that can help you to identify and challenge unhelpful thought patterns. This process can be a valuable tool for personal growth, emotional regulation, and improving overall well-being.



Take Your Thoughts to Court

Bring to mind one negative or unhelpful thought that may come up regularly for you. For example: “I don’t have any friends or people that care about me”

Take a moment now to write this thought down in the space below:

Now that you have identified one negative or unhelpful thought, I am going to ask you 3 questions to reflect on that will help you to consider an alternative way of viewing this particular thought.

1. What is the evidence *for* this thought or belief?

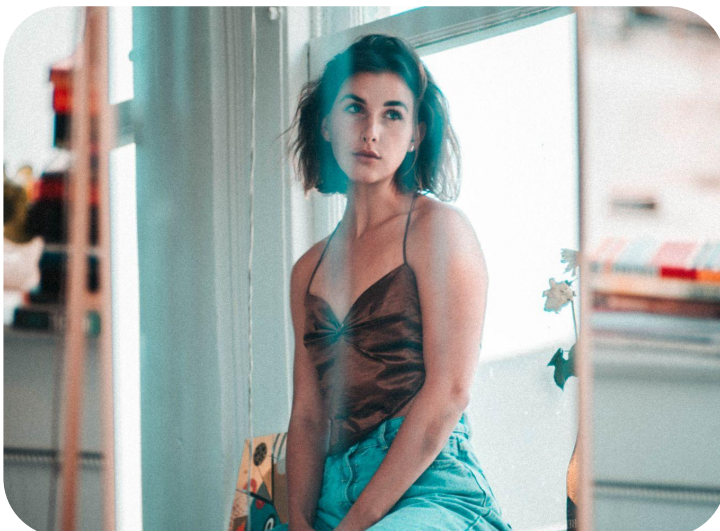
2. What is the evidence *against* this thought or belief?

3. Now, weighing up both sides of the argument, what is a more balanced thought?

Next Steps

I would encourage you to practice this exercise and ask yourself these questions whenever you notice a recurring negative or unhelpful thought pop up in your mind.

Over time this process of ‘taking your thoughts to court’ will become a natural habit and you will find that you are better able to think in a more clear, helpful and balanced way.



INFLEXIBLE RULES FOR LIVING

Each of us has our own 'rules for living' - the beliefs, expectations, and assumptions that we have about ourselves and the world around us. These rules can be conscious or unconscious and help us to make decisions and guide our behaviour, thoughts and emotions.

Our rules for living can be formed based on a variety of factors, such as personal experiences, cultural background, and social conditioning.

These rules can be helpful in providing structure and guidance in our lives, but if they become too rigid, inflexible or unrealistic they can actually be detrimental to our mental well-being and contribute a sense of anxiety when life does not align with our rules.

Having inflexible rules for living can contribute to anxiety because it can lead to excessive worry, rigidity in thinking and behaviour, and an inability to adapt to changing circumstances.

It can sometimes be challenging to recognize our own inflexible rules for living, as they are often deeply ingrained and may be difficult to identify.

However, here are some signs that you may have inflexible rules for living:

- You have high and unrealistic expectations for yourself and others.
- You feel anxious, stressed, or guilty when you don't meet your own or others' expectations.
- You find it challenging to adapt to change or new situations.
- You find it challenging to make decisions or take actions that go against your rules.
- You have a rigid sense of right and wrong

'BREAK YOUR RULES FOR LIVING' EXERCISE

In today's session, I am going to guide you through an exercise that will help you identify an inflexible rule for living and help you to reconstruct this rule to create a more helpful rule to live by.

To begin, select one area of your life from the following list:

1. Health and Wellbeing
2. Relationships
3. Career
4. Finances
5. Self-Development



Next, write down below one inflexible rule you have for living in this domain. *For example if you have selected 'relationships' an inflexible rule in this area may be that you need to put others before yourself at all times.*

Now that you have identified one inflexible rule for living - in the next section, I will ask you a series of questions to help you better understand how this rule is impacting your life.

'BREAK YOUR RULES FOR LIVING' EXERCISE

1. What is my unhelpful rule?
2. How and why did I end up developing this rule?
3. How does living by this rule negatively affect me?
4. Is my fear or the worst-case scenario likely to happen?
5. What would be an alternative realistic or healthy rule?
6. What can I do to implement this rule in my life today practically?

Next Steps: You can apply these questions to any inflexible or unhelpful rule in your life. By working towards rules for living that are more realistic and self-compassionate, we set ourselves up for being able to better deal with change, uncertainty and unforeseen challenges in life.

THE IMPACT OF NARROW COMFORT ZONES

A narrow zone of comfort refers to a limited range of situations, experiences, or environments in which a person feels comfortable or confident. This could be in relation to various aspects of life, such as social interactions, work tasks, physical environments, or personal challenges.

For example, a person who has a fear of being in large crowds may have a narrow zone of comfort when it comes to being in rooms or events and venues where there are lots of people gathered. This person may avoid activities like going to shopping malls, sporting events, concerts or birthday parties due to the intense anxiety and discomfort they experience in these situations. Or if they do attend, they may limit their participation in the situation by standing close to a door or in the corner of a room. They may also need to take frequent breaks away to help them manage their anxiety.

People with a narrow zone of comfort tend to place limits on what they will or will not do. And this can limit their growth and opportunities for personal development.

Can you think of a circumstance where you have played it safe or said no to an opportunity because of anxiety? *Take some time now to write down some examples in the space below.*

THE IMPACT OF NARROW COMFORT ZONES

It can sometimes be difficult to identify the areas of your life where you have a narrow zone of comfort. Here are a few indicators that may help you identify if you have a narrow zone of comfort:

- **You avoid trying new things:** If you tend to stick to familiar routines and activities, and avoid trying new things.
- **You feel overwhelmed by change:** Change is a natural part of life, but if you find yourself feeling overwhelmed or stressed when faced with changes, it could be a sign that you have a narrow zone of comfort.
- **You have a fear of failure:** If you have a fear of failure, this can lead you to avoid trying new things and limit your willingness to explore new experiences.
- **You struggle with decision-making:** If you find it difficult to make decisions, it could be a sign that you have a narrow zone of comfort. You may feel overwhelmed by the options available to you, or worry that you will make the wrong choice.

Which of the above indicators can you identify with?

Expanding your zone of comfort is a worthwhile pursuit, as it can lead to personal growth, increased self-confidence, and the ability to handle a wider range of situations and experiences.

STEP OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE

Stepping outside of your comfort zone is essential to interrupting the anxiety loop.

One way in which we learn to manage our anxiety is by engaging in what psychologists call “**safety behaviours**”. These are behaviours that give us momentary relief or distraction from the situation we find difficult.

Although it will be uncomfortable at first to let go of these avoidance techniques or safety behaviours, it’s essential that we learn to tolerate the temporary distress so that we can learn to feel at ease in situations that may otherwise cause us anxiety or stress.

I will now guide you through an exercise that is designed to help you step out of your comfort zone.

Briefly write down a typical situation that causes you anxiety?

Now, write down a particular behaviour that you engage in when you are in this particular situation to help you cope with anxious feelings that arise.

Next, I’d like you to write down 3 alternative actions you could take to replace this safety behaviour the next time you are in this anxious situation.

The final part of this exercise is to put these new behaviours into practice and take note of how you feel. I’d like to challenge you to replace the safety behaviour you identified with one of these new more helpful behaviours that you have just listed.

DISRUPT CATASTROPHIC THINKING

Catastrophic thinking is a type of negative thinking pattern that involves imagining the worst possible outcomes of a situation or event. People who engage in catastrophic thinking often focus on the worst-case scenarios and imagine that they are more likely to occur than they actually are. Catastrophic thinking can be applied to any situation or area of one's life- for example:

- “If I fail this test, I will never pass school, and I will be a total failure in life.”
- “If my partner leaves me, I will never find anyone else, and I will never be happy again.”
- “If I don’t get this promotion at work I will never get another opportunity again”

Fortunately, there are several things that can be done to manage catastrophic thinking. Here are 4 simple steps:

1. **Challenge your thoughts:** Try to identify the thoughts that are leading to catastrophic thinking and challenge them. Ask yourself if they are realistic or if there is any evidence to support them.
2. **Focus on the present:** Catastrophic thinking is often focused on the future. Try to bring your focus back to the present moment by practising mindfulness or meditation.
3. **Take action:** If you're worrying about something that you have control over, take action to address the issue. This can help to reduce feelings of helplessness and anxiety.
4. **Practice relaxation techniques:** Relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, or yoga can help to calm your mind and reduce anxiety.

UNCOVER THE ROOT OF YOUR FEARS

Today I am going to guide you through an exercise that is all about helping you uncover the root of what is making you anxious or fearful. The exercise uses a technique called **Socratic questioning**, which is utilised in cognitive behaviour therapy. Socratic questioning is a powerful tool that can help individuals with anxiety to examine and modify their negative patterns of thinking and behaviour.

To begin, bring to mind something that you have been worried about recently. This may be something that is worrying you in your professional life or your personal life. Write a brief summary below:

What would be the worst thing to happen if this worry were to come true?

What would be so bad about this happening?

What would this say about you as a person/individual?

What is the core belief or beliefs at the heart of how you are feeling about this situation? *For example, some core beliefs sound like “I’m unworthy”, “I’m a failure”, or “I’m unlovable”.*

If you have identified an unhelpful belief, I would invite you to challenge this belief by using some of the techniques we have discussed in this series.

WHAT ARE PANIC ATTACKS?

A panic attack is a sudden onset of intense fear or discomfort that can last for several minutes or more. During a panic attack, you may experience a range of physical and emotional symptoms, including:

- Rapid heartbeat or palpitations
- Sweating
- Trembling or shaking
- Shortness of breath or a feeling of choking
- Chest pain or discomfort
- Nausea or abdominal distress
- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Feelings of unreality or detachment from oneself
- Fear of losing control or going crazy
- Fear of dying

Panic attacks can occur unexpectedly or be triggered by specific situations or objects. Some of the common early signs of a panic attack may include increased heart rate, shortness of breath, sweating, nausea or dizziness.

Panic attacks can be caused by a variety of different factors such as a stressful life events, a psychological condition, or persistent negative thinking patterns.

If you experience a panic attack, here are some things you can do to help manage the symptoms:

- **Breathe deeply:** Take slow, deep breaths, inhaling through your nose and exhaling through your mouth.
- **Practice mindfulness:** Try to focus your attention on the present moment rather than worrying about the future or dwelling on the past.
- **Use relaxation techniques:** Progressive muscle relaxation, yoga, and meditation are all techniques that can help promote relaxation and reduce feelings of anxiety.

MINDFUL BREATHING EXERCISE

In today's session, I am going to guide you through a mindful breathing exercise that can help to delay or prevent the onset of a panic attack, or help you to calm down if you are in the midst of a panic attack.

When you breathe mindfully, you activate the parasympathetic nervous system, which helps to calm the body and reduce feelings of anxiety and panic.

To begin, find a space where you won't be disturbed for the next few minutes.

1. Take a deep breath through your nose, filling your lungs completely and then exhale.
2. Next breathe in through your nose for 4 seconds, 1, 2, 3, 4
3. Now exhale through your mouth for 4 seconds 1, 2,3,4
4. Let's try this again...
5. Breathe in through your nose for 4 seconds, 1, 2, 3, 4
6. Exhale through your mouth for 4 seconds 1, 2,3,4
7. And one final round together again...
8. Breathe in through your nose for 4 seconds, 1, 2, 3, 4
9. Exhale through your mouth for 4 seconds 1, 2,3,4

Take moment now to be still, and notice how you feel in your body. What do you notice? Perhaps you notice that your heart rate has slowed down and your body feels more relaxed?

I hope you found this exercise useful. I would recommend practising this mindful breathing exercise whenever you start to feel tense or uneasy.

By practising mindful breathing regularly, you can build resilience and develop a greater sense of calm and control, which can help to reduce the frequency and intensity of panic attacks over time.

HOW TO USE CBT RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy) relaxation techniques can help reduce stress, anxiety, and other negative emotions by teaching you how to change your thoughts and behaviours. Relaxation techniques can also be helpful in managing anxiety because they activate the body's relaxation response, which counteracts the stress response that is associated with anxiety.

These techniques may be particularly helpful for you if you are experiencing headaches, tightness or pain in muscles, difficulty sleeping, irritability, fatigue or low energy levels.

Here are some examples of CBT relaxation techniques:

- **Deep breathing:** Deep breathing is a simple relaxation technique that involves taking slow, deep breaths through the nose and exhaling slowly through the mouth.
- **Progressive muscle relaxation:** This technique involves tensing and relaxing each muscle group in the body, starting from the feet and moving up to the head..
- **Mindfulness meditation:** Mindfulness meditation involves focusing your attention on the present moment, without judgment or distraction.
- **Imagery-based relaxation:** Imagery-based relaxation involves visualizing a peaceful scene, such as a beach or a forest, and using this image to promote relaxation and calmness.
- **Progressive relaxation with guided imagery:** This technique combines progressive muscle relaxation with guided imagery to promote relaxation and reduce stress and anxiety.

The great thing about these techniques is that a number of them can be practised at any time anywhere throughout the day. For example, deep breathing can be done while you sit on public transport or while you sit at your desk at work.

Throughout the remaining sessions in this series, I will guide you through a range of CBT relaxation techniques so you can feel the benefits for yourself and find the techniques that work best for you.

PRESENT GROUNDING EXERCISE

Anxiety often arises from worrying about the future or dwelling on past events, which can create a sense of fear, uncertainty, and overwhelm. By focusing on the present moment and grounding yourself in your immediate environment, you can reduce the power of those anxious thoughts and emotions.

Today's exercise is a **5 senses grounding technique** which involves focusing your attention firstly on 5 things you can see, then 4 things you can hear, then 3 things you can feel, followed by 2 things you can smell and finally 1 thing you can taste.

View or listen to the video for this session to practice the guided version of this exercise.

BREATH MEDITATION EXERCISE

In today's session, I would like to guide you through a **guided breath meditation** that is designed to be done when you are in a calm state and in a relaxed and comfortable environment.

Studies have shown that regular meditation can help to reduce anxiety by reducing activity in the amygdala which is the area in the brain associated with the fear and stress response. Regular meditation has also been shown to improve emotional regulation, learning and memory.

Listen to the video for this session to experience the guided version of this exercise. I would suggest trying this practice a few times a week and gradually you will find it becomes much easier to settle your mind.

MUSCLE RELAXATION EXERCISE

In today's session, I will be guiding you through a relaxation exercise known as **progressive muscle relaxation**.

The exercise consists of moving through the whole body and slowly tensing and then releasing different muscles. The effect should be an immediate sense of relaxation following each release.

Progressive muscle relaxation can be an effective tool in managing anxiety by promoting physical relaxation and mindfulness, and it can be used in combination with other anxiety management techniques, such as deep breathing, meditation, and cognitive-behavioural therapy.

View or listen to the video for this session to practice the guided version of this exercise.

AFFIRMATIONS FOR INNER CALM

When we are anxious, we tend to ruminate on negative thoughts, which can cause us to feel even more anxious and stressed. In today's session, I will be sharing with you a simple **positive affirmation practice** that is designed to help you rewire unhelpful thoughts and negative thought patterns.

The amazing thing about our brains is that they are neuroplastic - meaning that our brains have the ability to change based on new information, experiences and learnings. When we actively start to repeat new thoughts this creates new neural pathways in our brains so that over time this new way of thinking becomes our default. When we repeat positive affirmations to ourselves, we are essentially reprogramming our brains to think and feel more positively.

View or listen to the video for this session to practice the guided version of this exercise.

VISUALISATION FOR CONFIDENCE & INNER PEACE

A challenging side effect of experiencing anxiety regularly is that it can really impact your sense of confidence and self-belief. Anxiety means that you may feel a sense of worry, fear, or nervousness about various aspects of your life. This can lead you to doubt your abilities and question your decisions which can contribute to a decline in self-confidence.

In today's session, I will be guiding you through **visualisation for self-confidence and inner peace**.

Visualization can be a powerful tool to help with anxiety and relaxation by using mental imagery to create a sense of calm and control. It can also be a way for you to visualise and rehearse positive outcomes in your mind so that this starts to feel more familiar to you than imagining worst-case scenarios.

Listen to the video for this session to experience the full guided version of this exercise. **Make a note of how you felt after this practicing this visualisation in the space below:**



HEALTHY LIFESTYLE HABITS TO ALLEVIATE ANXIETY

In our final session, I am going to share with you some practical healthy lifestyle habits that will help you to reduce and manage anxiety in daily life. We have covered some complex concepts in this series, but I would like to highlight that there are plenty of simple everyday lifestyle habits that can also make a huge difference to your anxiety levels.

Here are 5 simple healthy lifestyle habits that can help alleviate anxiety.

- **Exercise regularly:** Exercise has been shown to have a positive effect on mood and anxiety. Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise most days of the week.
- **Get enough sleep:** Lack of sleep can make anxiety worse, so it's important to get enough restful sleep. Try to stick to a regular sleep schedule and practice good sleep hygiene, such as avoiding caffeine and electronic devices before bed.
- **Eat a healthy diet:** Eating a balanced diet that includes plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean protein can help improve mood and reduce anxiety.
- **Stay connected:** Social support is important for mental health, so make an effort to regularly spend time with friends, family and people who make you feel happy and relaxed.
- **Limit your time on social media:** Social media has become an important part of life for many people, but it can also serve as an anxiety trigger specifically if you have the tendency to compare yourself to others or be engaged by distressing news stories.

It's important to note that while these lifestyle habits can help alleviate anxiety, they may not be enough for everyone. If you're struggling with anxiety, it's important to talk to a healthcare professional about your treatment options.

KEY LEARNINGS

We have now come to the end of this series and I hope that you have found it to be insightful and informative. To close our series, I thought it would be useful to recap some of the key learnings we have covered so far:

- Anxiety is a feeling of fear, dread, and uneasiness. One of the most common anxiety conditions is known as **Generalised Anxiety Disorder**, which is defined by an uncontrollable and persistent worry that affects day-to-day life on an ongoing basis.
- **Unhelpful thought patterns** like catastrophizing, over-generalization and mind reading contribute to anxiety by causing excessive worry about fears that may never occur.
- **Cognitive Behavioural therapy** can help us to identify and challenge these unhelpful thought patterns.
- Part of overcoming anxiety is learning to step out of our **narrow zones of comfort** and exposing ourselves to situations or circumstances that we feel apprehensive about. By challenging ourselves in this way we can learn the skills and coping mechanisms we need to feel more confident in these situations.
- **CBT relaxation techniques** such as deep breathing, mindfulness and grounding practices can be particularly helpful for alleviating symptoms of anxiety such as tense muscles, headaches and difficulty sleeping.

And finally, you should consider **seeking treatment** for your anxiety if it consistently interferes with your being able to function optimally in daily life. A mental health professional will be able to set up a mental health plan that addresses your unique needs.

Well done for completing this series.

I hope you have been able to learn some valuable tools and techniques that will help you to manage and alleviate your own experience of anxiety.

I would encourage you to review the notes you have made in this workbook and put the key learnings and insights into action.

Finally, remember that your journey with managing anxiety will be an ongoing one, be patient with yourself and make it a priority to always treat yourself with kindness and compassion.

I wish you all the best for the next chapter of your journey.

Dr. Vicki

