

# What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a natural response to stress and an important way our minds and bodies help keep us safe.

While it's common to feel anxious from time to time, anxiety can become harder to manage when feelings of worry, dread, or fear stick around or start to affect your everyday life.

**1 in 4 people**  
experience anxiety at some point in their lives.



## Types of anxiety

### Generalised anxiety disorder (GAD)

Ongoing, excessive worries about everyday things not tied to a specific event.

### Social anxiety

Constant fear of being judged or watched by others.

### Phobias

Intense, long-lasting fears of specific things, situations, or activities.

### Panic attacks

Brief episodes of intense mental and physical anxiety symptoms.

## Signs & effects

Anxiety can feel different for everyone, but some common experiences include:



### Feeling restless or on edge

Like something bad might happen, even if you're not sure why.



### Getting stuck in overthinking

Worrying or looping thoughts that are hard to switch off.



### Noticing changes in your body

Tense muscles, a racing heart, shaky hands, sweating, dizziness, or feeling sick.



### Struggling with sleep

Trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, or waking up tired.



### Avoiding things that feel too hard

Staying away from people, places, or situations that trigger anxiety.



### Finding it hard to get started

Everyday tasks or decisions can feel overwhelming or just too much.

# Causes

Anxiety can build up from lots of different experiences and influences, such as:

## Going through difficult times

Growing up around instability, experiencing trauma, or seeing anxiety in family members can play a part.

## Feeling pressure from life

Things like rising costs, health worries, or relationship challenges can all add up.

## Changes in mental wellbeing

Low self-esteem, unhelpful thought patterns, or built-up anger can contribute.

## Facing specific triggers

Crowds, reminders of past trauma, or certain places, objects, or situations can spark anxious feelings.

## Using substances

Things like alcohol, caffeine, or other drugs can sometimes make anxiety feel worse.

## Managing health challenges

Chronic pain, injuries, hormonal changes, or poor sleep can affect how you're feeling.

Experiencing anxiety is never your fault. Whatever the cause, there are ways to navigate what you're feeling. And remember, support is available every step of the way.

# Recognising when and how your anxiety shows up

Having a plan like below can help you prepare for situations that might make you feel anxious. This can make it easier to spot what's happening and respond in ways that support your wellbeing.

## Anxiety management plan

### Anticipate

**What might lead to feelings of anxiety?**  
e.g., work stress, relationship problems, finances

### Identify

**How will I know I'm feeling anxious?**  
e.g., trouble sleeping, tension, looping thoughts

### Manage

**What can I do to cope?**  
e.g., do a grounding technique, call a friend, go for a walk, or see a therapist



Wherever you are, help is at your fingertips with the **Support Toolkit**

➤ [lifeline.org.au/toolkit](https://lifeline.org.au/toolkit)

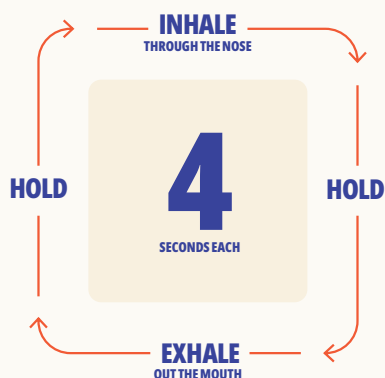
# Practical management strategies

- 
**Talk to someone you trust**  
 Sharing your worries can make them feel less overwhelming.
- 
**Move your body**  
 Walking, yoga, or any gentle exercise can help ease anxious energy.
- 
**Cut back on caffeine & alcohol**  
 Reducing caffeine, alcohol, or other substances can help lower anxiety levels.
- 
**Use grounding techniques**  
 Focusing on what's around you can help calm your body and mind.
- 
**Make sleep a priority**  
 Good-quality sleep can help you cope better with daily stress.
- 
**Seek support**  
 A therapist or support group can provide tools and understanding to help manage anxiety.

## Want to try something now?

If you're feeling distressed or unsure where to start, a grounding technique like **box breathing**, **reciting something in order**, or **using your five senses** can help ease physical sensations and take your focus off what's causing you to feel anxious.

### BOX BREATHING



### RECITING TECHNIQUE

You can try reciting:

- the alphabet
- the months, backwards
- what you did yesterday



### 5 SENSES TECHNIQUE

Look for...

-  5 things you can **see**
-  4 things you can **feel**
-  3 things you can **hear**
-  2 things you can **smell**
-  1 things you can **taste**



Everyone is different, so what works for someone else might not work for you, and that's okay.

The key is to keep experimenting until you find what helps you most.

# When to seek help

You may want to speak to a health professional if:

- ✓ Your anxiety feels overwhelming or doesn't seem to go away.
- ✓ Worrying is affecting your daily life, self-esteem, or relationships.
- ✓ You're avoiding people, places, or activities to cope with anxiety.
- ✓ You're struggling to keep up with responsibilities at work or school.
- ✓ Things like headaches or difficulty sleeping aren't improving.
- ✓ You're experiencing frequent or overwhelming panic attacks.

## Reaching out can feel difficult, but it's a sign of strength.

Support is always available to help you feel more in control and hopeful for the future.

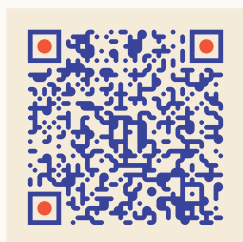
# Support is available

Understanding and managing anxiety isn't something you have to do on your own.

Head to our **Support Toolkit** to find more practical strategies and discover national and local support services that can help.

The Support Toolkit also offers information on a wide range of mental health and wellbeing topics you can explore at your own pace, whenever you need.

Visit [lifeline.org.au/anxiety/services](https://lifeline.org.au/anxiety/services) or scan the QR code to get started.



**If you're feeling overwhelmed right now, Lifeline is here to support you.**

You can reach us 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

📞 Call 13 11 14

✉ Text 0477 131 114

💬 Chat online at [lifeline.org.au/crisis-chat](https://lifeline.org.au/crisis-chat)

**If your life is in danger, please call 000.**