



# The A - Z of Anxiety

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# What is Anxiety

Feeling anxious and nervous is a normal part of life. You may feel anxious before an important meeting or presentation or before going on a long trip or doing something new. This anxiety is common and normal. It doesn't typically interfere with your normal day to day life and generally passes as soon as the event that triggered it is over eg. the presentation is done.

When the feelings of anxiety and panic interfere with your daily life, are difficult to control or are out of proportion to the actual danger itself it can be worth seeking help.

## Symptoms of Anxiety



When someone is anxious, they may feel frantic, panicked, or scared. They may be worried about all sorts of small details and may ruminate on them. Anxiety may also disturb your sleep and leave you feeling more tired and fatigued on waking than you were before you went to bed the night before. Depression is also common for people with anxiety.

The most common signs and symptoms include:

- feeling nervous, restless or tense;
- having a sense of impending danger, panic, or doom;
- increased heart rate, rapid breathing, sweating;
- nausea, headache, feeling faint;
- gastrointestinal problems;
- trouble concentrating or thinking of anything other than the present worry;
- difficulty sleeping;
- tightness in the throat and difficulty swallowing;
- heart palpitations.

## What causes Anxiety

The causes of anxiety are not fully understood. Life experiences such as traumatic events appear to trigger anxiety disorders in people who may already be prone to anxiety. Inherited traits can also be a factor. Sometimes anxiety is linked to an underlying health issue.

The A-Z list on the following pages offers some ideas and suggestions that can help ease anxiety. It is by no means an exhaustive list and is not designed to be used as a treatment for severe anxiety or depression. If you feel depressed, have trouble with alcohol or drug use or have suicidal thoughts or behaviours, please seek emergency treatment immediately.



# The A - Z of Anxiety

*Pick the items that resonate best with you. No need to try them all at once. Make note of how you feel. Take your time, work at your own pace. Remember, these actions and activities are designed to make you feel better NOT more anxious. If something doesn't feel right for you - STOP.*

## AVOID SOCIAL MEDIA

as the compare and despair factor can be unsettling and lead to reduced self esteem. Remember not all social media posts are 100% factual and they don't always represent real life. Limit your time on social media and connect with your real friends instead.

## B6 (Vitamin B6, Pyridoxine)

helps to regulate your mood and reduce anxiety levels as its involved in the production of the neurotransmitters serotonin (our happy hormone) and GABA (our calming hormone). *Food sources: spinach, lean beef, chicken, turkey, fish, sunflower seeds, bananas, avocados, pistachios, dried prunes, dried apricots and raisins*

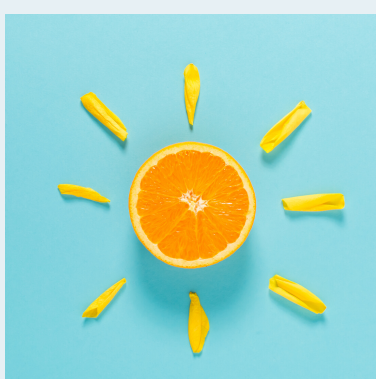
## VITAMIN C

is a well known antioxidant. Studies have shown that oxidative stress may trigger neuropsychological disorders leading to emotional instability. Vitamin C helps convert dopamine (our pleasure and reward hormone) into noradrenaline which is essential for focus, memory performance and emotional calm. Vitamin C helps us to cope with physical and mental stress and to bounce back quicker. *Food sources: citrus fruits such as oranges, mandarins, lemons, kiwi fruit, papaya, strawberries, capsicum, tomatoes and brussels sprouts.*

## VITAMIN D

activates genes that help release neurotransmitters. Due to the high risk of skin cancers in Australia many Australian's have low levels of Vitamin D. Low levels can cause intense sadness and fear. Spending time outside gardening, exercising, reading can help increase Vitamin D levels.

*Food sources: cooked salmon, cod liver oil, canned tuna, yoghurt, egg yolk, liver.*



## EXERCISE

reduces the stress hormones adrenaline and cortisol whilst stimulating the production of feel good endorphins. The key to exercise is to choose an activity that you enjoy and do it regularly. Aim for 30 minutes several times a week working at a pace that is comfortable for your current fitness levels.

## FRIENDSHIP

is vital as loneliness has been shown to increase social anxiety and feelings of paranoia. Recent studies have found that loneliness is as bad for your health as smoking 25 cigarettes a day. To ease loneliness and stay connected, try phoning a friend, join a group or a club or exercise outside.



## GRATITUDE

when you practise gratitude you're able to see past what's making you anxious. It can help you to feel more optimistic and increase your happiness. It helps to build confidence, can alleviate stress and improve your sleep. Try keeping a gratitude journal where you list 3 things you're grateful for each day.





# HERBAL MEDICINE

is the oldest and still the most widely used system of medicine in the world today. It is medicine made exclusively from plants. There are a number of plants that can help ease stress, reduce anxiety and elevate the mood. Herbs are powerful and very effective and may have interactions with prescription or pharmaceutical medications. Before starting anything new its always best to consult a qualified Naturopath.



## IDENTIFY YOUR TRIGGERS

this can help reduce anxiety attacks as you may be able to avoid or better manage circumstances that trigger your anxiety. Common triggers include: alcohol, bright lights, loud noises, certain smells, crowds, low blood sugar, caffeine, unhealthy foods, certain medications, emotional trauma, lack of socialisation, low motivation.

## JASMINE

works by increasing the GABA activity within the brain to help regulate feelings of stress, anxiety and over-excitement. Try adding a few drops to an essential oil burner or alternatively jasmine flowers can be steeped in boiling water and drunk as a herbal infusion.

## KEEP CALM

practising deep breathing can help to calm a racing mind and reduce panic. Try sitting back in your chair, place your hand on your belly and take a deep slow breath in down to your belly. You should feel your hand raise. Breath out slowly like your breathing through a straw. Repeat this for 10 rounds or until you feel calmer.

## LAVENDAR

reduces cortisol levels and induces a state of relaxation and sedation. It helps to reduce the heart rate and has antispasmodic effects that can relax smooth muscle. Lavendar can be drunk as part of a relaxing/sleepy tea blend or a few drops can be added to an oil diffuser.



## MAGNESIUM

plays a protective role against excessive nerve transmission and excitation. Its a smooth muscle relaxant and helps to stimulate GABA receptors in the brain which slows down excessive brain activity. Magnesium reduces stress hormones and helps to stabilise blood sugar levels.

## N-Acetyl Cysteine (NAC)

helps to slow down glutamate activity that causes heightened anxiety states. NAC is an antioxidant which helps to reduce oxidative damage and helps to balance the activity of neurotransmitters in the brain. Seek advice of a health professional (Naturopath or Nutritionist to see if NAC is suitable for you.

## OMEGA 3

reduces inflammation not only in the body but also in the brain. Brain inflammation causes a breakdown in signalling between cells leading to further inflammation. Reduction of inflammation results in improved stress handling and reduction in anxiety and depression. *Food sources: salmon, tuna, sardinesm mackerel, fish oil supplements, chia seeds, flax and hemp seeds.*

## PRE & PROBIOTICS

Our gut bacteria influence the production of serotonin and dopamine. This is especially important given that more than 90% of the body's serotonin is found in the gut. *Food sources onions, leeks, garlic, chichory, fermented foods such as sauerkraut, kim chi, pot set yoghurt.*



# QUERCETIN

reduces corticotropin-releasing-factor (CRF) and increases tolerance to stress. People suffering anxiety and depression generally have increased concentrations of the stress hormone cortisol along with corticotropin-releasing-factor (CRF), the hormone released by the hypothalamus in response to stress that ultimately leads to the release of stress hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol by the adrenal glands. People with anxiety and/or depression therefore have a heightened sensitivity to stress. *Food sources citrus fruits, apples, onions, red wine and black tea. Also in smaller amounts in green leafy vegetables such as spinach and kale..*



# ROUTINE

can be helpful for depression and anxiety as it provides some structure and a sense of control. Having a regular routine also allows you to create space in your day for self care techniques that can help you to control anxiety symptoms.

# SLEEP

deprivation can cause anxiety and anxiety can also cause problems sleeping. Sleep hygiene practises can be very helpful such as avoiding the use of phones and computers 1 hour before bedtime, drinking a relaxing herbal tea, diffuse essential oils, deep breathing techniques, journaling can all improve quality of sleep.

# THEANINE (L-THEANINE)

is an amino acid found in green and black tea. L-Theanine enhances alpha brain wave activity and increases synthesis of GABA which in turn increases levels of dopamine and serotonin resulting in feelings of calm and well-being. Before taking L-Theanine as a supplement, check with a Naturopath or Nutritionist to see if its right for you.

# UNDERSTAND

for many people suffering anxiety making decisions (big or small) can be very difficult. They may find themselves checking and comparing every option until they have exhausted themselves. Where possible give yourself time and space to think, research and understand. Alternatively set a timer on your phone. Allow yourself 10 minutes to check different options and then stop.

# VISUALISATION

is a relaxation strategy that makes it easier to cope during periods of high stress. Visualisation uses mental imagery to achieve a more relaxed state of mind. Try imagining you are resting on a beach. You feel safe, calm and relaxed. Think about: the colour of the water and the sky, the sound of the waves, the warmth of the sand under your feet etc as you lay back and take some deep breaths.

# WATER

All our organs, including our brain, need water to function properly. If you're dehydrated that puts a stress on the body. Being dehydrated by just half a litre of water can increase your cortisol levels – our stress hormone. When you're dehydrated you're heart rate is up and you're breathing heavier. All these symptoms can minic and worsen anxiety. Aim for 2 litres daily.

# XENIUM

a gift or offering to a stranger. Pay it forward. Practising compassion by striving to help others has been found to raises your self-worth, and reduce anxiety and depression. Examples of things you could implement here include volunteering in a community group, helping an elderly family member, friend, or neighbour, helping in an animal shelter.

# YOGA

poses (asanas) work to stretch, lengthen and balance muscles and can assist by releasing built up tension and stiffness in the body. Yoga incorporates breathing exercises, movement, visualisation and relaxation to help calm the mind and assist the body in letting go of stress. Joining a studio can help create a sense of community and help people to feel more connected.



# ZINC

is needed for the body to synthesise serotonin and GABA two neurotransmitters that regulate mood states. Numeous studies have shown a correlation between the amount of zinc consumed in the diet correlating with increased symptoms of anxiety and depression. If considering zinc supplementation, seek advice of a qualified practitioner to ensure the correct dosage. *Food sources: seafood especially oysters and mussels, chicken and turkey (thigh), pepitas, cashews, almonds, chickpeas, kidney beans.*



## Other resources

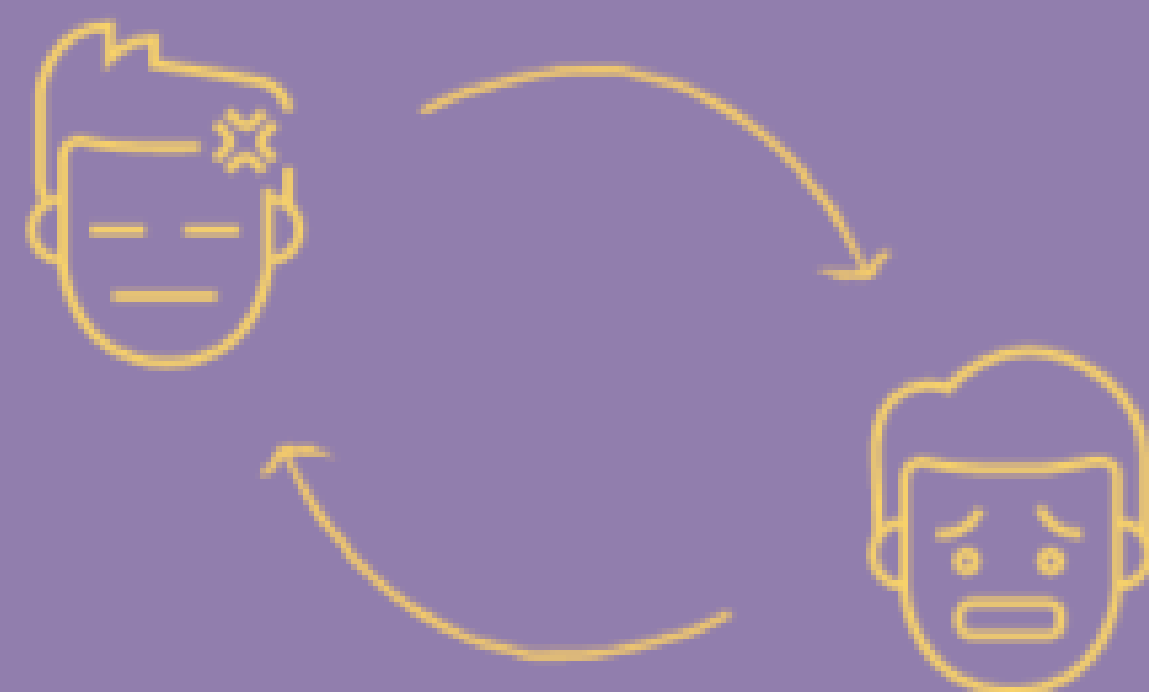
The following pages contain some resources to help you.

- **The Wellbeing Stress** test will enable you to check in with yourself and see how your fairing with the current stressors in your life. Stress can take its toll on the body, and being stressed for long periods of time can create negative long-term effects.
- **The Mood Tracker** sheet can help you to track your mood and identify if there are any patterns to your mood. It can also be helpful to track improvements when you are trying something new.





# WELLBEING STRESS TEST



	Never	Rarely	1-2 times a month	Once a week	3-4 times per week	Everyday
Do you get headaches?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Do you get sick (cold & flu)?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Do you get indigestion?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Do you overeat?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Do you forget to eat?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Does your neck ache?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Do you feel tired?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Do you have trouble sleeping?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Do you find it difficult to exercise?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Do you drink alcohol?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Do you drink coffee?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Do you feel irritable or easily annoyed?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Do you find it hard to make decisions?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Do you feel overwhelmed or helpless?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Do you feel insecure?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Do you respond in anger to minor problems?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Do you have difficulty winding down or relaxing?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Do you want to cancel appointments with your friends?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Do you have difficulty enjoying your hobbies?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Do you have difficulty focusing your attention?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Do you set unrealistic deadlines?	0	1	2	3	4	5

Total Score:

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## Results

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### 0-30

Well done! You are handling the ups and downs of daily life and maintaining your balance. Try and avoid unnecessary stress and keep yourself physically and mentally healthy.



### 30-60

You're coping okay, but you could use some improvements. You may be suffering some stress-related symptoms. Find ways to reduce stressors where possible, and make sure you find time to relax and wind down.



### 60-85

You're experiencing some significant signs of stress. Pay close attention to your lifestyle and reconsider your current diet, exercise and relaxation status. Make yourself and your wellbeing priority number one and utilise your support network.



### 85 +

You are most likely experiencing extreme stress! Contact your healthcare practitioner as soon as possible, as they will be able to support you through the changes necessary to reduce your stress.

## Coping Tips

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### Use your Support Network

Whether it is talking with a friend, a family member, counsellor or group, having someone to talk to about what is going on in your life is incredibly beneficial. Don't underestimate the importance of a good chat.

### Take Time-out

Take time for yourself where you are not thinking about what is causing you stress or unease. This could be reading a book, having a relaxing bath, going for a walk, meditating, or 10 minutes of mindful breathing.

### You can say "NO"

It is all right to say "no" to someone's request. Often, we create extra stress and anxiety for ourselves by taking on too much. If you do not have the time or the energy to do something, you have the right to say no, without feeling guilty.

### Make a plan

Be prepared and plan ahead if you know something stressful is coming up. Start to think of strategies you could use during this time.

If you're feeling stressed speak to your healthcare practitioner to restore your wellbeing.




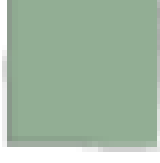
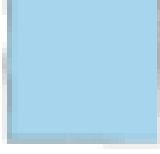

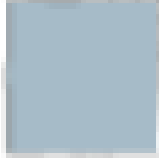
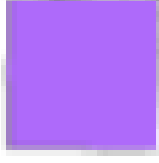
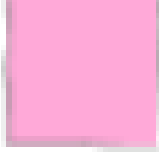



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# MOOD TRACKER

	Month One	Month Two	Month Three
Week 1			
1			
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8			
9			
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31			

-  angry/grumpy
-  average
-  happy/joyful
-  annoyed
-  calm/comfortable
-  on-edge/restless
-  sad
-  sick/tired/blah
-  productive/energetic
-  nervous/anxious

## Personal Notes

Month One

Week 1

Week 2

Week 3

Week 4

Month Two

Week 1

Week 2

Week 3

Week 4

Month Three

Week 1

Week 2

Week 3

Week 4





# Seeking help

Sometimes anxiety is so overwhelming it makes it hard to cope. If anxiety is starting to affect the way you're living it's important to find help. There are lots of people who can help and there are many ways to treat anxiety.

You can:

- Talk to someone you trust.
- Visit a hospital emergency department
- Contact your GP, a counsellor, psychologist or psychiatrist

## Organisations that can help include:

**Lifeline** – ph. 13 11 13 (24 hours, 7 days a week)

**Black Dog Institute** – [www.blackdoginstitute.org.au](http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au)

**Beyond Blue** – ph. 1300 223 636 [www.beyondblue.com.au](http://www.beyondblue.com.au)

**1800RESPECT** – ph. 1800 737 732 (for domestic violence and sexual assault)

**Relationships Australia** – ph. 1300 364 277

**Men's Line Australia** – ph. 1300 789 978

**Kids Help Line** – ph. 1800 551 800

**Suicide Call Back Service** – ph. 1300 659 467

Remember also that your GP can help you with a mental health plan enabling you to access 10 sessions per calendar year with a psychologist or accredited mental health worker with a Medicare rebate.





I hope you've found some of the tips in this e-Book helpful in managing your anxiety. I personally have times in my life where I struggle with anxiety. I believe this helps me to understand and relate to the anxious states that others find themselves in.

As a Naturopath & Nutritionist I believe in the power of food, herbs and nature to help soothe the nervous system and calm the mind. I also understand that this often isn't enough. If your struggling, please reach out for help. If you'd like to try a Naturopathic approach, I'd love to chat with you.

You can contact me on 0409 083 934 or [odellkerryn@gmail.com](mailto:odellkerryn@gmail.com)

I wish you much healthy and happiness always

*Kerryn*



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