

Calming anxiety

BREATHE

(...and not in the 'just sigh away the pain' dismissive way). Controlled breathing can be an effective way to calm anxiety attacks.

Three-part breathing requires you to take one deep breath in and then exhale fully while paying attention to your body.

Once you get comfortable with deep breathing, you can change the ratio of inhalation and exhalation to 1:2 (you slow down your exhalation so that it's twice as long as your inhalation).

Practice these techniques while calm so you know how to do them when you're anxious.

TRY PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE EXERCISES

Practicing progressive muscle relaxation can help you calm down and center yourself.

To do this, lie down on the floor or sit on your bed with your arms out by your side - anything that is comfortable for you. Clench your toes tightly for five seconds and then release. Slowly move up your body, tensing and releasing your calves then your thighs, buttocks, core, chest, face, and finally your full body.

OTHER TIPS

- Use PRN if applicable
- listen to music
- Use play dough/ slime/ clay scented with essential oils.
- Read a book
- Watch a movie
- Make origami
- Play cards or a board game
- Use a stress ball or fidget tool
- Blow bubbles

NEED MORE SUPPORT? CALL A NATIONAL HELPLINE



13 9276
[HTTPS://WWW.13YARN.ORG.AU/](https://www.13yarn.org.au/)
 Culturally safe support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experiencing crisis



1300 659 467
[HTTPS://WWW.MINDSPOT.ORG.AU/](https://www.mindspot.org.au/)
 Free, online personalised mental health care and suicide call-back service



1300 78 99 78
[HTTPS://MENSLINE.ORG.AU/](https://mensline.org.au/)
 Free telephone and online counselling offering support for Australian men anywhere, anytime.



1800 650 890
[HTTPS://HEADSPACE.ORG.AU/](https://headspace.org.au/)
 National Youth Mental Health Foundation providing mental health services to 12-25 year olds.



1300 22 46 36
[HTTPS://WWW.BEYONDBLUE.ORG.AU/](https://www.beyondblue.org.au/)
 Free and confidential counselling service for all Australians looking for a little help with their mental health.



1800 187 263
[HTTPS://WWW.SANE.ORG/](https://www.sane.org/)
 SANE is for people with recurring or complex mental health issues and trauma, and for their families, friends and community



1800 33 4673
[HTTPS://BUTTERFLY.ORG.AU/](https://butterfly.org.au/)
 Butterfly Foundation is the national charity for Australians impacted by eating disorders, and for the families, friends and communities who support them.



13 11 14
[HTTPS://WWW.LIFELINE.ORG.AU/](https://www.lifeline.org.au/)
 A national charity providing 24 hour crisis support and suicide prevention services.

So, you're experiencing distress

Your ultimate guide to coping with overwhelming anxiety



Low-level activity ideas



Gentle reminders



Tips for communicating when you feel distressed

Ask (to clarify what you've heard)

If something feels unfair, bring it up! There is a chance you have misunderstood exactly what is being said and that you are perceiving it to be more extreme than it really is. Our brains have a tendency to grip onto small details that challenge us, and make them into something much worse than they really are.

Write a letter

Sometimes it can be a lot easier to take your own time and space and put your thoughts/ feelings/ opinions into writing. Writing things down into a letter can help you collect your thoughts and deliver them in an organised, ordered and articulate manner. You can better convey what you want to say without being overcome by emotion or frustration. It is up to you whether you share the finished letter or keep it for yourself!

Bring someone with you

It is common to shut down and enter a state of overwhelm during meetings or confrontations - they can be extremely overstimulating and also provide major information overload. Consider having someone else whom you trust present in these instances so that they can act as a second pair of ears. maybe they will be able to catch some points that you missed or help you understand in a different light.

Write down key information

It can feel almost impossible to remember every detail of conversation, so be sure to take notes. Also feel free to write down talking points before any clinical discussions and to write down any questions that you may have so that they don't escape you when you have the chance to ask them.

Lived-experience advice

We asked young people with disabilities who have self-reportedly experienced extreme distress to anonymously share some of their best advice. This is what they said:

"Know that it's not forever. Things will not always be as heavy as they are now. Life is not always going to be this hard."

"It's not your fault. You do not 'deserve' this. You are not a 'bad' person."

"You are not a burden. You are a human being and deserve to be treated as such."

"Go easy on yourself. If you need to rewatch the same show or listen to the same songs on repeat, do it!

"Learn how to communicate your limits before situations arise."

"Build your own toolbox of coping skills and grounding techniques. Everyone is different - what works for someone might not work for another."

"Practice visiting a safe place in your mind. Make a space that you can return to at any time, from anywhere, and that is all yours."

"Be creative! I like to carry flashcards with me that remind me of my motivators to keep going for when things feel too much."

"Learn how to assert your needs. You are not selfish for doing so!"

"Practice, practice, practice. It only really gets easier with time. Try and reframe your perspective to recognise that discomfort brings change, and change is good."