

A Guide to understanding and coping with common mental health issues.

Issues covered in this guide include:

- Warning Signs of a Mental Health Crisis
- Coping With Anxiety
- Coping With Depression
- Coping With Stress
- Coping With Bullying & Cyber-bullying
- Active Listening and how it can help

Help And Assistance

If you are concerned about yourself, friends or family get immediate support and information 24/7 by FreeTexting **HELP** to **50015**. Texting 50015 is free of charge from any network and you can text this number even if you have no credit.

For information on Emergency Contacts, National Helplines, Local Support Groups and your nearest Places of Safety visit www.ineedhelp.ie

Always call 999 if someone is seriously ill or injured, and their life is at risk.

Gardaí / Ambulance / Fire call 999 or 112

Youth Suicide Prevention Ireland

Registered Charity 20070670

83A New Street, Killarney, County Kerry V93 FR59

☎ 1800 828 888 ✉ admin@yspi.ie

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Coping with ANXIETY



COPING WITH DEPRESSION, ANXIETY AND STRESS
Short guides to coping with common mental health issues

Coping *with*

ANXIETY

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Written by Dr Hannah Farnsworth

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It is common to feel anxious in your teenage years. In fact, anxiety is thought to affect up to 1 in 3 people before they reach the age of 18. Although it is a common condition, living with anxiety can start to spoil your enjoyment of everyday life, and even stop you from doing the things you used to love.

If you feel like anxiety is starting to rule your life, or you have noticed that a friend seems anxious, we have plenty of tips to help you get anxiety back under control.

What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is a type of fear, and it can feel a lot like stress.

Common situations that might make you feel anxious include:

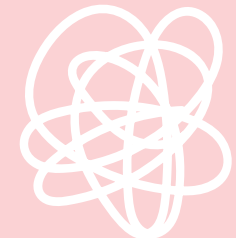
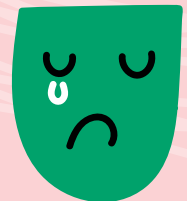
- Worrying about speaking in front of the class
- Falling out with your friends
- Feeling like you won't do very well in an exam at school.

But being anxious is not always a bad thing. Here we will use the example of feeling anxious before an exam to explain the difference.

Feeling anxious before an exam is normal, and it may even encourage you to get your revision done.

However, if you feel so anxious about the exam that you start to feel overwhelmed or unwell, then this level of worrying could be unhealthy. Some teenagers even find that they continue to feel worried or panicky after the exam has passed. In these situations, the anxiety is not serving a healthy or useful purpose, and can feel extremely unpleasant.

When anxiety is bad, it can feel like it follows you around like a heavy weight or a black cloud. If you feel like anxiety is always there, or it makes you dread going to school or stops you from doing your hobbies, it's time to make some changes.

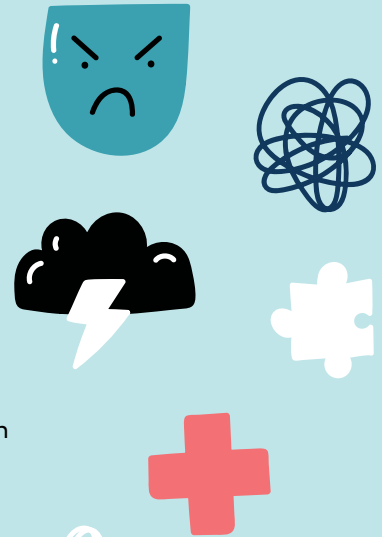


How do I know if I'm Anxious?

Anxiety can cause both physical and emotional symptoms, all of which can feel horrible. The list below may help you to recognise the characteristics of anxiety.

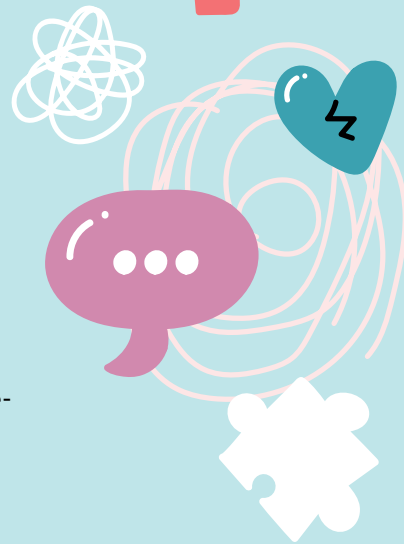
Physical Symptoms

- Feeling dizzy
- Feeling sick or getting butterflies in your stomach
- Headaches
- Feeling your heart racing or pounding
- Shallow or rapid breathing
- Shaking or noticing a tremor in your hands
- Aches or pains in your muscles or joints
- Being unable to get to sleep or waking up in the night feeling worried.



Emotional Symptoms

- Feeling stressed, nervous, or panicky
- Being grumpy, irritable, or lashing out at friends or family
- Feeling tired or exhausted
- Difficulty concentrating at school
- Constantly thinking about the situation or event you are nervous about
- A sense of dread, or feeling sure that something awful is going to happen
- Feeling like you can't cope.



How Can I Reduce my Anxiety?

If you are experiencing some of the symptoms above, you may be going through a period of anxiety. The good news is that there are lots of simple ways you can start to feel better and manage stressful situations that may occur in future.

Recognise the Symptoms

The good news is that if you're reading this, you have probably already recognised some of the symptoms in yourself or a friend.

Whether you have noticed physical or emotional changes, or a combination of both, the symptoms may have tricked you into thinking that you have a physical illness. Realising that how you feel could be down to anxiety can be reassuring, and will help you to look for help in the right places.



Talk to Someone

Opening up to someone else can make things feel easier. Speaking to friends, siblings, a parent or another trusted adult may help put things in perspective. The person you talk to may be able to offer advice or tips that you hadn't thought of. Feeling supported can really help when you feel anxious.

If you don't want to talk to someone close to you, make an appointment with your doctor or find out if your school has a counsellor who you could talk to.

Write it Down

If you have stopped doing your hobbies, no longer want to hang out with your friends, or dread going to school, it may become clear that anxiety is reducing your enjoyment of life.

Writing a journal or getting your thoughts down in your phone or on paper can help get things in perspective. Even writing a simple list of the things that are worrying you can help you to see where your anxiety may be arising from.

Writing or repeating affirmations has been proven to help your mental health. Try reading affirmations such as "I am trying my best" or "I can succeed." It sounds too good to be true, but if you keep repeating it, you will start to believe it.



Take a Social Media Break

Social media is great for keeping up with your friends, but using it too much can start to bring you down. Try to have a break from using your phone and social media, especially in the hour before you go to bed.



Stay Healthy

Keeping physically well will improve your mental health. Try to exercise each day, even if it's just a walk around your neighbourhood. Choose a healthy mix of foods, try to get enough sleep, and avoid caffeine, alcohol, and drugs.

Get Organised

If you leave studying until the last minute, you are bound to feel stressed. Rather than working through the night to get an assignment in on time, organise your time and start school projects earlier so that you don't end up putting additional pressure on yourself.

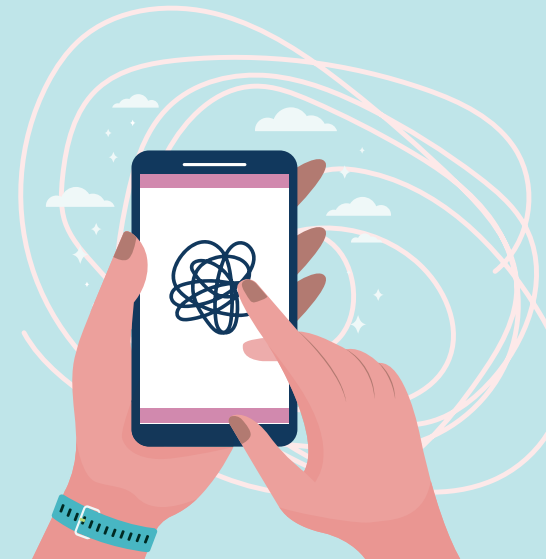


Practice Breathing Exercises

Breathing exercises can feel strange at first, but there are many apps and online videos that can guide you through this relaxing process. Before you discount it, try it once to see if it helps you feel less anxious.

Download a Mindfulness App

Mental health apps offer guided meditations to help you with mindfulness. They are often tailored to a specific need such as difficulty falling asleep or feeling panicky. Some are short, lasting just 2 or 3 minutes to help you quickly calm down, whereas others might take half an hour. Simply select the meditation that you think will best suit how you feel at the time.

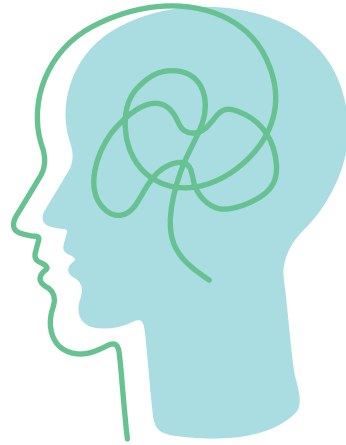


How Can I Help my Friend Who is Having a Panic Attack?

A panic attack is an intense form of anxiety that might last for around ten minutes. Panic attacks create feelings of intense fear, shaking, difficulty breathing, and even chest pain. But watching a friend having a panic attack can be scary for you, too. Knowing how to help a friend who is having a panic attack can make the experience less stressful for you both.

Keep Calm

Even if you feel scared, try to keep calm. If your friend doesn't mind you talking to them, remind them that the panic attack won't last long, and that you will stay with them until it passes. Some people find it helpful to be reminded that they are safe, and that the panic attack can't hurt them. Others find it soothing to be reminded to breathe slowly.



Ask What They Need

Your friend may find it hard to tell you what they need, but it is worth asking if there is anything you can do. If they respond in a rude manner, or don't respond at all, don't take it personally. If they want you to go away, give them space but don't leave them on their own.

When an attack occurs in public, ask them if they would like to find somewhere more private.

Afterwards, ask your friend what you could do in future to support them if they have another panic attack.



Learn the Patterns

Most people get a warning sign of a panic attack, so ask your friend how they know that a panic attack is coming. They may feel breathless, have a pounding heart, become dizzy, or experience feelings of terror.

Learning their patterns or triggers may help you to realise what is happening sooner, meaning that you can begin to help them more quickly.

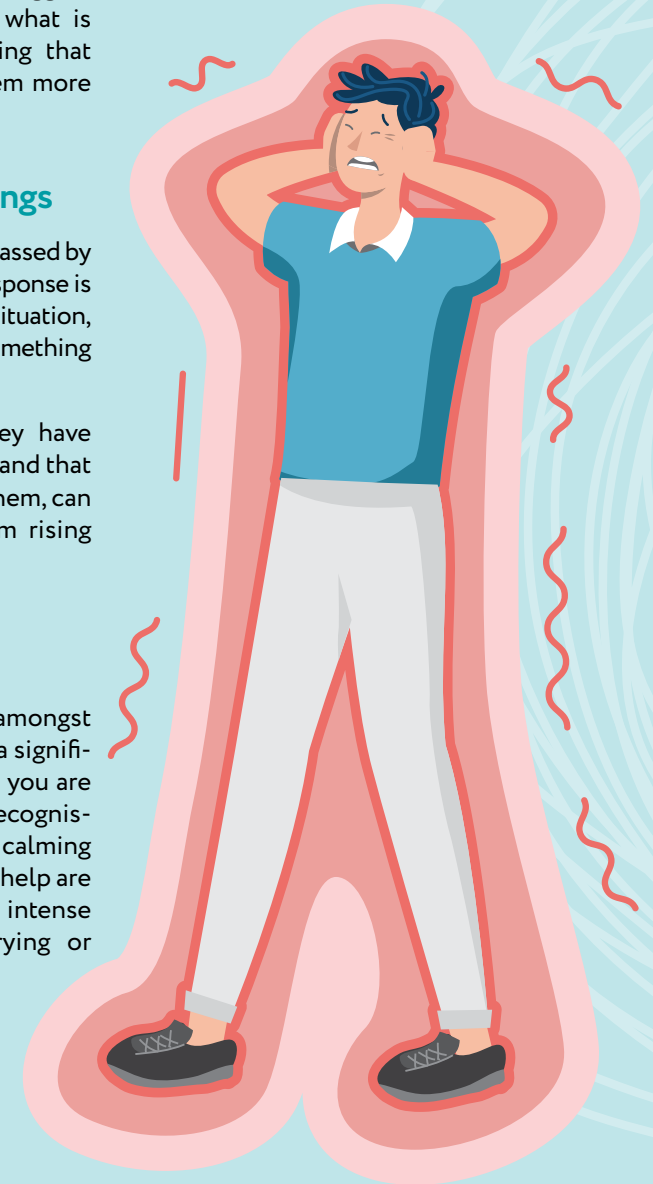
Validate Their Feelings

It is common to feel embarrassed by a panic attack. The panic response is out of proportion to the situation, but the reaction is not something your friend can control.

Reminding them that they have nothing to be ashamed of, and that you are there to support them, can prevent their anxiety from rising further.

Final Thoughts

Anxiety is very common amongst teenagers, but it can have a significant impact on how much you are able to enjoy your life. Recognising the signs, trying new calming techniques, and asking for help are all wise ways of managing intense periods of anxiety, worrying or stress.



Help and Assistance

If you are concerned about yourself, friends or family you should contact your GP or Out of Hours Service immediately.

You can also get immediate support and information 24/7 by

FreeText HELP to 50015

Texting 50015 is free of charge from any network and you can text this number even if you have no credit. This service is fully confidential and YSPI has no information on mobile numbers that use the FreeText service



For information on:

- Emergency Contacts
- National Helplines
- Local Support Groups
- Directions to your nearest GP or out of hours clinic
- Directions to your nearest safe place or refuge

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About Youth Suicide Prevention Ireland

Youth Suicide Prevention Ireland was founded in 2007 as there were no national charities focusing specifically on the problems and issues of youth suicide and self-harm in Ireland. We now provide a range of services aimed at mental health awareness and suicide prevention amongst teenagers.



We run our “Four Steps to Help” Programme for schools and colleges around Ireland which provides Zoom workshops. We also have a video workshop presented by John Sharpson that any organisation can book through our website at schools.yspi.ie/video.php We provide a wide range of free information including our “Let’s Talk About Mental Health” magazine delivered to schools and organisations as well as the “Coping With” series of mental health guides.

We also operate a **24/7 FreeText Crisis Information Service** and fund a Youth Crisis Counselling Service.

Full details are available at www.yspi.ie

You can help us save more young lives by donating to our work or by joining a fundraising event.



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