



Guiseley School

How are You?

Hello to you all. I hope you're keeping well despite the loss of sunshine recently. Looking back to last week, I really do hope that it helped some of you out there who needed a push to talk to the people around you and get some support. I hope you feel less lonely and I hope you now have faith that better times are coming. This week I'm looking at anxiety, I think perhaps most of us have been visited by the anxiety bug at some stage in our lives and I think we can all agree it's a very unwelcome guest in our minds. Lockdown and anxiety do not mix so I hope this week helps evict anxiety from your lives!



Self-Care: When to ask for help

Believe it or not anxiety is actually there to help us. Think about how and why you learnt to look both ways before crossing a road as a child, or learning not to talk to strangers etc. These acts all come from a place of mild anxiety to learn to protect ourselves for the "What ifs" in the world. Without a little anxiety we would be careless and prone to risky behaviours. The problem with anxiety occurs when it grows to such a place that it is no longer serving you as a healthy function to prevent us from harm, it actually causes problems rather than solve them.

Anxiety has taken over when:

- It interferes with your life
- You struggle to feel calm day to day
- Your brain can no longer tell the difference between fearful situations

in real life or the situations you create in your mind alone.

The last full study was done in 2013 and found that there were 8.2 million cases of adults suffering from anxiety in the UK. Can you imagine what it would be if they did the survey today? If anxiety is starting to become a problem in your life, please be assured, you are not alone and nor should you continue to suffer alone.

The list of symptoms of general anxiety is huge but some of the main contenders are:

- Feeling on edge, tired and irritable
- Feel a sense of dread for no reason
- Having trouble sleeping
- Experiencing a strong, fast irregular heartbeat
- Feel like you have a dry mouth



- Sweat excessively
- Repeatedly check things and seek assurance from others
- Feeling sick, dizzy or short of breath
- Avoid situations or put things off you are worried about
- Get headaches and /or stomach aches

There are many others but these are from the NHS website and appear to be the ones that resonate the strongest with people. As stated above these are the main symptoms for **general** anxiety but there are other more specific types such as **social** anxiety, specific fears and **phobias** and **panic** disorders. These all come with their own array of symptoms that you can find on any of the resources I will be highlighting later.

For some people anxiety pops up and takes over their lives without so much as a hello, for others it feels like it's constantly been there humming away in the background. It can be absolutely mentally exhausting as well as physically painful at times and when you don't know how to ease it, you can fall into destructive coping mechanisms that may make you feel like they're helping but are actually making it worse.. These include:

Avoidance- sometimes avoiding the situation/issue may seem like the best solution but it just magnifies the problem

and feeds the anxiety no end and keeps you trapped in the anxiety cycle.

Perfectionism - You may feel you are more in control of your anxiety if you achieve everything perfectly...all of the time. Just writing that sentence makes me feel exhausted. This is not a helpful thought process, by setting these impossibly high standards on yourself you are setting yourself up for more anxiety if you make mistakes...like everyone does. Don't do this to yourself, no one is perfect ...at all ...whatsoever.

Rumination - this is something where you think about something over and over again, then again some more. You might find your mind drifting to think of worse possible scenarios as a way to figure out solutions for them . Focusing on your fears only sends signals to your brain that there is something to be afraid about. This once again strengthens the anxiety cycle.

Compulsions - Now these are often a hard thing to discuss. I suffered these in my adolescence. It can be anything from checking your door is locked 20 times to make sure your house is safe but they can escalate quickly. It can take over many aspects of your life and needs stopping . These rituals do not make your anxiety go away-it's feeding it.



Light in The Lockdown!

Similar to last week, I'm using this week's light in the lockdown to give you some hope that you can tackle this...and win. I'll look at things that you can try to help take control of your anxiety. I am however strongly recommending that if you feel completely overwhelmed then seek professional help. For the time being let's look at simple little things you can do day to day to start chipping away at this big mass of anxiety.

Face your anxiety! -Yes, I know, no one wants to do this but it's crucial. Facing your fears, challenging your thoughts all add up to you feeling stronger, the stronger you feel the more likely you are to break this vicious cycle. I'm not expecting you to go to have an instant battle and try and take everything on at once. That would be cruel and also set you up for failure. Let's break it down into small steps to get you started.

Start documenting your thoughts - Get them all down in a journal, it can help with the process of getting them out of your head and onto paper. It can also assist in identifying your triggers and patterns.

Set a worry time - This may sound bizarre but it actually works for some people. If you feel like your days are being consumed by your thoughts of worst-case scenarios, self-doubt and fears set yourself a time each day to go

through all your concerns and then stop, you've had your time allocation, leave it until tomorrow.

Inbox or spam? - This is a technique I use with adolescents but it works just as well on adults. Take a moment to write down your worries into these two categories. What actually warrants your energy and what quite frankly is junk mail that simply needs putting in the bin. We've all received an email and thought "Why on earth am I being sent that?" Treat your own self-destructive thoughts in the exact same manner.

Shift your focus - You cannot go through the entire day being consumed by anxiety, it zaps your energy and quite frankly is an absolute time thief. Find an outlet that gives you a break from this. I recently read an amazing book called 'Jog on-how running saved my life' by Bella Mackie about a woman who was desperate to break free from her severe anxiety and started jogging. At first just a few minutes at a time, then gradually built it up. It broke all of her avoidance habits and when she jogged, she didn't worry, she concentrated on her breathing and putting one foot in front of another and not falling over. I'm not saying jogging has to be your escape but think of something that could do the same for you.



Spotlight on: additional support for anxiety

This section will be the same as last weeks and focusing on additional support for anxiety if you need it.

NHS website - Below is a direct link to the NHS anxiety webpage. I cannot rate this highly enough. I have sourced a lot of my information from this as it gets straight to the point. It also has a quiz which can help identify what type and to what degree anxiety is affecting you and the best ways to help. They also list symptoms, causes, external support and so much more. There are also links to videos on each section which give you a deeper look into what we've been talking about today:

https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/anxiety?gclid=EA1aIQobChMI6-b2luD56QIVVOvtChOE0AWVEAAYASAAEgI0K_D_BwE

Leeds Mental Wellbeing service, (formally known as IAPT-Improving access to psychology treatment) - This is a route you can take without having to see your GP. Below is a link for you to self-refer. It is a free counselling service which deals with issues such as anxiety, stress and depression and they are an excellent service. They ask which GP you attend and will take you to the nearest service. They offer face to face sessions (when ease of lockdown allows) and telephone counselling and much more. Please take a look:

<https://www.leedscommunityhealthcare.nhs.uk/our-services-a-z/leeds-mental-wellbeing-service/what-we-offer/>

GP – a GP appointment is also a really positive step to getting help. I have put a link below to **Mind** website in which they outline the treatment options for anxiety. This includes talking therapies such as counselling and CBT (cognitive behavioural therapy). It also looks at medication options and self-help tactics you can bring into your daily life. I always feel it's really helpful for you to know your options before your appointment. This gives you time to digest the information and options out there and have time to think about which you feel would be the best option for you. It gives you a head start towards your recovery and assists in making sure your treatment route is lead by you. Have a read and make sure you're well informed:

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/anxiety-and-panic-attacks/anxiety-treatments/>

Next week I'm looking at mindfulness which goes hand in hand beautifully with all treatment options for anxiety, stress and depression.

