



**HELP** for  
**HEROES**

**RECOVERY COLLEGE:**  
SELF-HELP GUIDES  
TO RECOVERY

MOVE FORWARD:  
**MANAGING**  
**ANXIETY**

# WHAT IS ANXIETY?

Anxiety is your body's natural reaction to stress and is characterised by a feeling of worry or fear, that can be mild to severe.

It's a normal emotion that everyone experiences from time to time, and it can cause a range of physical symptoms such as:

- + **A RAPID HEART RATE**
- + **SWEATING**
- + **FINDING IT HARD TO SIT STILL**
- + **TROUBLE SLEEPING**
- + **DIFFICULTY CONCENTRATING.**

In this guide, you will find advice on some of the small lifestyle changes you can make at home to manage general feelings of anxiousness and unease.

# LEARNING TO MANAGE YOUR ANXIETIES

There are lots of small things you can do to help manage feelings of anxiety. If you find that you are experiencing regular feelings of unease, try incorporating a few of these into your daily routine.

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## KEEP ACTIVE

Keeping yourself active is known to decrease stress and tension and elevate your mood. Try to incorporate being active into your daily routine – a twenty-minute walk in the fresh air can boost your mood and relax your mind.

## TAKE TIME TO BREATHE

Take some time out each day to meditate or try some breathing exercises – both are fantastic activities for helping to manage anxiety. In our Field Guide to Self Care, you'll find our 'Soothing Rhythm Breathing' video, which includes some simple breathing exercises that can help calm your body from the effects of stress. Create structure to your day by setting aside a specific time to do a soothing activity you enjoy, so that you look forward it.

Yoga can also help ease the physical discomfort caused by anxiety.

**Our Self-Help Guide to Yoga for Wellbeing includes everything you need to give yoga a try at home.**

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## **FOCUS ON THE GOOD THINGS**

Focusing on the positive can distract you from anxious or negative thoughts. Try keeping a daily gratitude list. At the end of each day, make a list of everything around you that makes you happy and take time to acknowledge and be grateful for these things.



## STAY CONNECTED

When we are feeling anxious, we can be tempted to withdraw from life and hide ourselves away, but this is the worst thing we can do – after all, humans are social beings. Stay connected to friends and loved ones. Make a habit, when you are feeling anxious or worried, of reaching out to someone you trust – whether that’s by picking up the phone or arranging to meet for a cup of tea – and talk about what’s on your mind. You will feel better for it.

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## **NOTICE WORRY AND TAKE STEPS TO DEAL WITH IT**

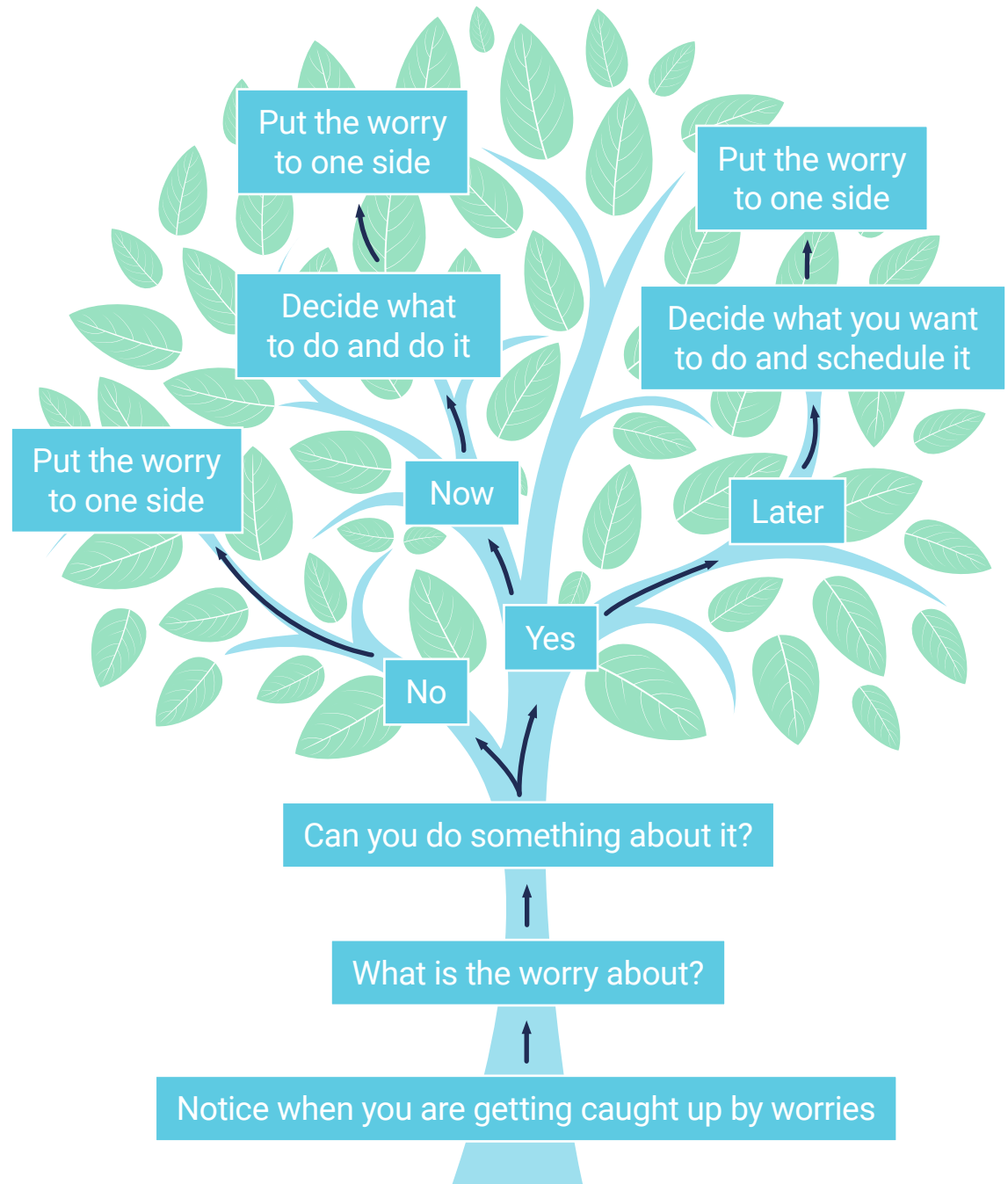
It can feel like some situations are beyond your control, and some of them are. Worrying about events or situations you have no control over only leads to more worry, so try to put these things to one side and focus instead on the things you can make decisions on.

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# THE WORRY TREE

Worrying is your mind's way of helping you plan for all eventualities, but the truth is that it can simply fuel distress.

This simple flow chart is designed to help you get to the root of your worries, focus on what you can control and let go of the rest.





# LESS NEWS IS GOOD NEWS

Over-exposure to the news can be bad for your mental health, with lots of studies showing it causes stress, anxiety and sleep loss. Stay informed but set yourself a limit on the amount of news you watch or consume each day. Avoid stories or footage that you recognise are making you feel anxious or sad.

## TIP:

Try taking your 'emotional temperature' regularly. When you can feel it rising, it's time to put into place one or more of the techniques in this guide to calm your mind.



## RED

Your distress level is high, your thoughts are irrational and you feel angry, frustrated or disappointed.

## YELLOW

You feel a little anxious and you can feel that your thoughts are affected by your anxiety.

## GREEN

You feel happy and stress free and can think clearly.

**Bad thoughts increase the intensity of our emotions.**

# DO SOMETHING EACH DAY THAT MAKES YOU SMILE

Create a daily routine that includes at least one thing you look forward to. Make time for a favourite hobby or if you don't already have one, have fun exploring until you find an activity you enjoy. Sign up for an art class, learn how to play an instrument, try a new sport or simply make the time to lose yourself in a good book for a couple of hours each day. Pleasurable pastimes are a great way to calm an overactive mind.

Our Self-Help Guide to Owning Your Daily Routine includes tips on easy and enjoyable things you can plan into your day.

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## **APPRECIATE THE SMALL THINGS AND BE KIND TO YOURSELF**

Notice one good thing each day, no matter how small. It could be reading about an act of kindness in the news or appreciating a sunset. We may need to look a little harder to appreciate the good things in life, but when we do, it is worth it for that extra mental boost. Remember how important you are and all the things you are brilliant at – take time to look after you.

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## AND FINALLY...

Life can take its toll on our emotional wellbeing and it's normal to feel anxious or worried at times. While you may not always be able to control the things that are making you feel anxious, you can take steps to reduce your own feelings of worry and unease. By taking some of the steps outlined in this guide, you can make a positive difference to the way you feel day to day.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

**This NHS guide to anxiety includes some useful additional reading.**

If you have any questions at all, take positive action by contacting a member of our Recovery team:  
**[getsupport@helpforheroes.org.uk](mailto:getsupport@helpforheroes.org.uk)**