

July 2020

Anxiety - what is it?

We all experience anxiety, it is a natural human state and a vital part of our lives. Anxiety helps us to identify and respond to danger in 'fight or flight' mode. It can motivate us to face up to dealing with difficult challenges. The 'right' amount of anxiety can help us perform better and stimulate action and creativity. But there is another side to anxiety. Persistent anxiety causes real emotional distress and can lead to us becoming unwell and, at worst, developing anxiety disorders such as panic attacks, phobias and obsessional behaviours.

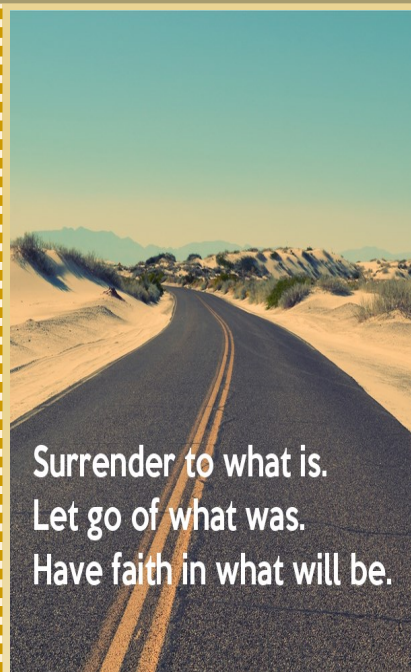
Anxiety at this level can have a truly distressing and debilitating impact on our lives and impact on our physical as well as our mental health. Anxiety is one of the most common mental health problems in the UK and it is increasing. Yet it remains under-reported, under-diagnosed and undertreated. A good ability to cope with anxiety is key to resilience in the face of whatever life throws at us. However, experiencing it too much or too often means we risk becoming overwhelmed, unable to find balance in our lives or to relax and recover. Our ability to find some inner peace has never been more important to our well-being.

The first part of managing anxiety is getting clear about what's causing it in the first place. This means being highly attuned to your experience, paying attention to what you're encountering in the world and the feelings it's provoking within you. The more aware you are of your day-to-day experiences and how they affect you, the greater chance you'll have of minimising your anxiety. When you're mindful of what's happening around you, you can quickly notice what's occurring and prepare to deal with it as effectively as possible.

There's often a stigma about mental health disorders, but having anxiety doesn't mean that you're weak, less than, or not faithful enough. The same way that someone might have a cold or physical illness, someone might have an anxiety disorder. Anxiety is often a result of a chemical imbalance in the brain or something on the physiological level, so it's nothing to be ashamed of or embarrassed about. Remember, you are important, you are not alone. If you're carrying too much anxiety and stress, you won't be as effective in the most important things in your life. Don't let anxiety get in the way of seeking help.

ANXIETY might be a reminder to:

- Turn off the screen
- Focus on what is within your control
- Remember that not all thoughts are true
- Deal with something you have been avoiding
- Take a few (or many) slow, deep & focused breaths
- Check in and listen to your wise voice within
- Treat yourself with gentle loving kindness
- Exercise (this helps to burn off the stress hormone cortisol)
- Get more sleep
- Simply notice that you are feeling anxiety, without judgment



HOW CAN WE HELP?

Over the next number of months the Health & Wellbeing Caseworkers hope to make direct contact with all members of SEFF to go over what forms of support are available within the new Individual Needs Programme. If you are eligible under the new frameworks, you will be invited to meet with the Caseworker on a one to one to complete an INC - Individual Needs Consultation form. This programme started in July 2017 and is available in total for four years. It is important to us in SEFF that those who are eligible receive all the support that has been made available to them.

INDIVIDUAL NEEDS PROGRAMME FOR VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS - (INC)

The Health & Wellbeing service has been put in place by VSS, to further support those whose health has been impacted through the time known as 'The Troubles'. SEFF have three Health and Wellbeing caseworkers based in various parts of the UK & R.O.I, who can arrange to connect with you and discuss your needs. Our aim being to help improve your overall wellbeing and support you in living your life to the fullest. We can do this by signposting you towards existing services that may be available to you, referring you into Counselling, Complementary Therapies, Befriending, Social activities, and also by accessing support through the VSS Additional Needs Frameworks as listed below:

Contact a Health and Wellbeing caseworker to discuss, details above.

Listed below are examples of some of the support already awarded through the VSS.

Disability Aids - Hearing aids, rollators, perching stools, wheel chairs. (Recommended by NHS but not covered by NHS)

Education & Training - Degrees, training courses, One to One tuition in numeracy/literacy. (Education impacted by Troubles)

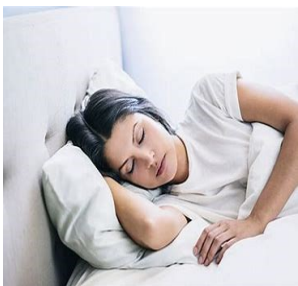
Trauma Focused Physical Activity - Gym membership, swimming pool access, yoga. (Recommended by practitioner)

Persistent Pain Management - Physiotherapy, therapies to support pain within NISCC guidelines (Recommended by GP)

Volunteering - Wellies, Safety gear, coats, tools. (Supported by an agency the individual volunteers with)

Psychological Therapies - Counselling. (May need recommendation through GP or other practitioner)

6 Ways to Practice Mindfulness



Sleep: Sleep is important in both your physical and mental health. Try to aim for 8 hours of sleep a day. To help with this you could listen to some relaxing music before bed and invest in some black out blinds.



Eating a well balanced diet: Is important to help fight off diseases and live a healthy life. Maintaining a health diet will ensure you are receiving all the nutrients your body needs.



Writing your thoughts down: We are constantly thinking and can be easily overwhelmed, therefore it is beneficial to write down your thoughts.

6 Ways to Practice Mindfulness



Breathing Exercises: Helps detoxify the body, whilst promoting a release of endorphins. This can help to reduce stress levels and feel more connected.



Maintaining Routine: Helps us to be more efficient and creates a structure. This can help us stay grounded and focus our energy, without feeling scattered.



Involvement with the outdoors: Can reduce anger, fear and stress. Being outdoors can make you feel better emotionally and improve your overall wellbeing.