



**Maynooth
University**
National University
of Ireland Maynooth

Counselling Service

Maynooth University



Tackle Your Anxiety

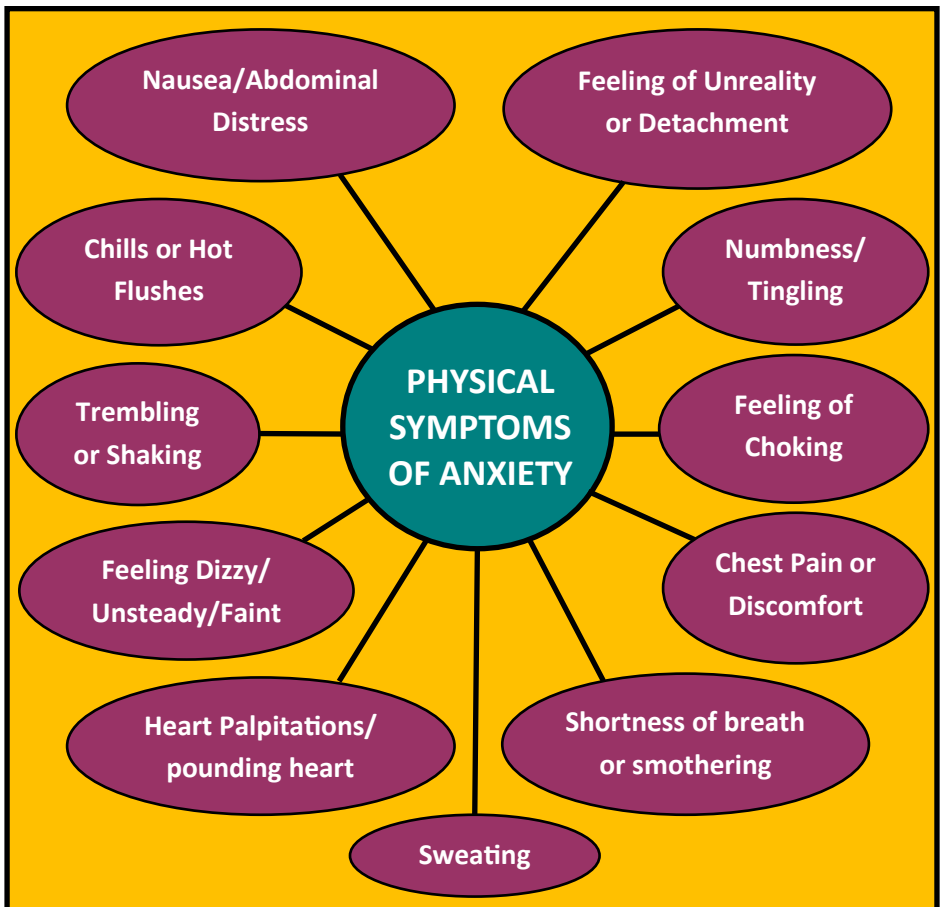
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HOW DOES HIGH ANXIETY COME ABOUT?

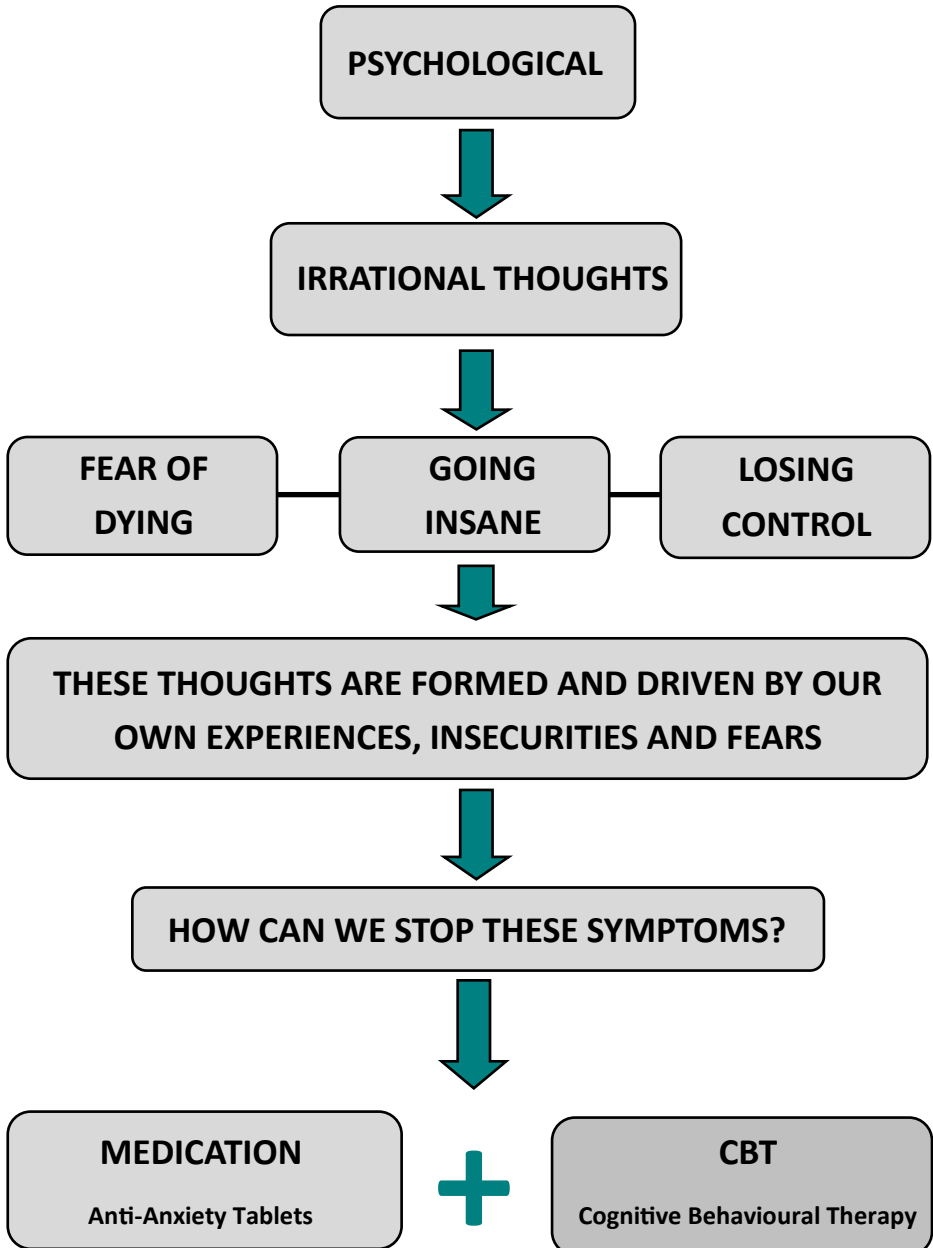
It doesn't happen out of the blue!

High anxiety can be triggered by different sources such as;

- ⇒ Not being assertive
- ⇒ Not getting the right balance between work and play
- ⇒ Taking illegal drugs

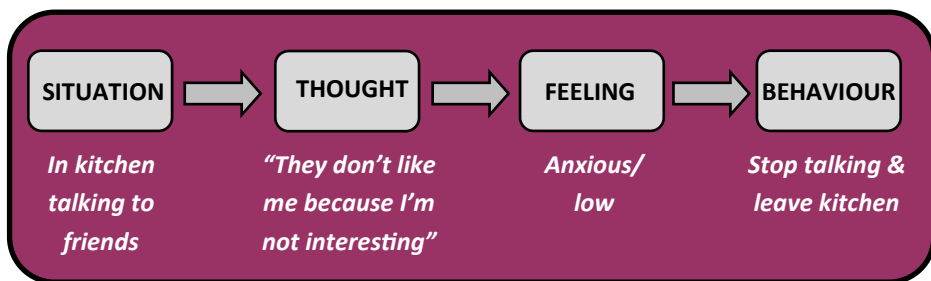


WHAT ARE THE PSYCHOLOGICAL SYMPTOMS OF ANXIETY?



HOW DOES CBT WORK?

This form of therapy looks at individual thoughts that we are experiencing when we are feeling anxious. This is based on the premise that as humans, we go about our lives in different situations (ie; in the kitchen talking to friends) and attached to every situation there is a thought or thoughts (ie; they don't like me because I'm not interesting), this is then followed by how we feel (ie; anxious and low) about this thought or thoughts which leads to our behaviour (ie; stop talking and leave the kitchen after a few minutes).



OUR THOUGHT PROCESS

By closely looking at what our thought process is (by using a Mood Diary) we can figure out if we are being irrational or not ie; what evidence is there to suggest that we are right? Taking the example above, this person automatically thinks his friends do not like him because he isn't saying anything interesting.

However, how many times through any friendship do we find that we are stuck for something interesting to say? If he had said that they don't like him because he isn't interesting and he knows this for a fact as one of them told him, then it would be a very rational thought.

IRRATIONAL THOUGHTS

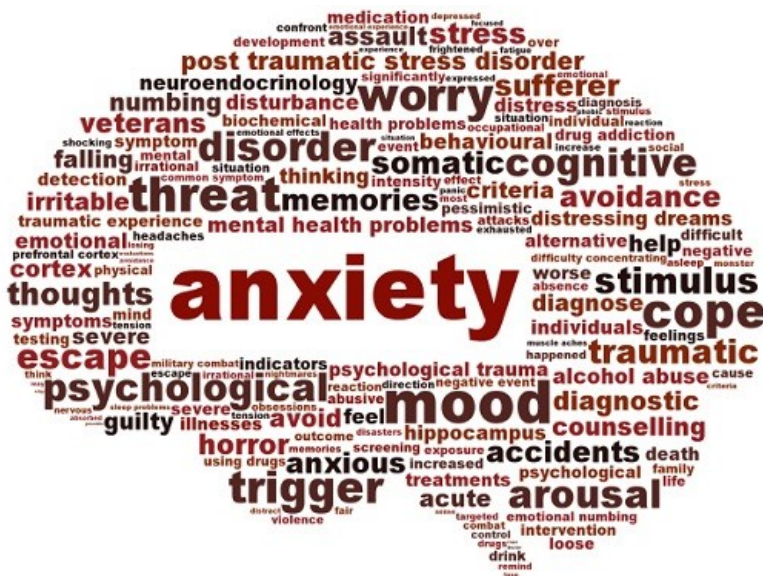
Once these irrational thoughts and fears are identified we then start to try to think rationally again. This is done by writing out the facts of the situation and learning it off like a mantra ie; *"They do like me, as they*

wouldn't have called to see me or want to hang out with me. I cannot be interesting all the time and they are not interesting all the time, which is only natural."

RATIONAL THOUGHTS ("MANTRAS")

It is important to expose ourselves to anxious situations not only to find out what our thoughts are and to challenge them in these situations, but also to practice our mantras (rational thoughts) within these situations, as it will stop us thinking about more negative thoughts and will therefore ease our anxiety.

If we avoid anxious situations, it will ease our anxiety in the short-term, but increases our anxiety in the long-term as we will automatically believe our irrational thoughts and add more irrational thoughts to them ie; "I'm glad I didn't go to the party because people would see that I'm anxious and they would laugh at me." However, if we challenge our irrational thoughts we will quickly find out that the actual situation is never as bad as we think it will be in our heads.



PRACTICAL TOOLS WHICH CAN HELP EASE AND PREVENT HIGH ANXIETY

TOOL	HOW IT HELPS REDUCE ANXIETY
DISTRACTION TECHNIQUES	Playing music, hanging out with friends, counting how many red cars are on the road are all good
DOING EXERCISE	This releases endorphins and uses up extra adrenaline.
PLAN ACCORDINGLY	Note when assignments are due in and plan accordingly ie; not last minute.
SET REALISTIC GOALS	Write down realistic goals for your day ahead. Planning unrealistic goals sets you up for failure.
BE PRESENT	Don't look too far ahead in your life, just focus on the present or near present.
EAT HEALTHY	Give your body the fuel it needs.
SLEEP	Make sure you're getting enough sleep so that you can function properly the next day.
BE ASSERTIVE	Think of yourself and say "no" as only you know what is too much to take on.
TAKE BREAKS	Make sure you take proper study breaks; your brain needs to switch off so that it can be more productive once it starts working again.
HAVE 'DOWN TIME'	Always have something to look forward to each day, no matter how small it maybe; eating your favourite meal or watching your favourite TV show.
TALK KINDLY TO YOURSELF	Note how you are talking to yourself, if you say to your self that you will feel anxious then chances are you will as it is a self-fulfilling prophecy.



BEING ASSERTIVE...

HOW IS ASSERTIVENESS RELATED TO ANXIETY?

Not being assertive ie; not telling people your needs or automatically putting other people's need above your own causes anxiety. This happens by you continuously suppressing your emotions and needs. You say one thing when actually the opposite is true, for example;

A person asks: *"Will you stay on in college for the night to help me with my assignment?"*

You think: *Well actually I have too much to do tonight as I still have to do the assignment and cook the dinner for my family.*

You respond: *"Yeah, that's no problem!"*

THE FALLOUT FROM THIS BEHAVIOUR

- ⇒ There is always room for compromise, however if you continue to dismiss your feelings by not conveying them to others, you will cause an inner conflict which increases your anxiety levels.
- ⇒ You also teach people how to treat you. Therefore, by you not putting yourself first others too will start to take you for granted, continue to be demanding of you and will not put you first.

***YOU HAVE TO RESPECT YOURSELF
FIRST IN ORDER FOR OTHERS TO
RESPECT YOU!***

ALTERNATIVE WAYS TO ANSWER THE QUESTION;

- ⇒ “I will help you for the next hour, however, I can’t stay for the night as I too have the assignment to do and I have to cook dinner.”
- ⇒ “Unfortunately I actually can’t help you tonight as I’m very busy myself, maybe another time that suits both of us.”

IDENTIFY YOUR OWN WANTS/NEEDS

In order to figure out what your needs are in every situation don’t rush to answer the request. Take a minute to check in with your own wants and needs to see if you can accommodate the request and plan how you wish to respond.

LEARN TO SAY “NO”

When someone asks you a question, it means you can say “yes” or “no” therefore think before you answer and if it doesn’t suit you can say “NO.” Remember, if others have a right to say “no” to your requests sometimes then you have the same right!

Please remember saying “no” doesn’t need to be done in an aggressive or passive aggressive manner. Simply acknowledge their request and state politely why you are saying “no.” Be aware of your tone of voice and your body language so that your message can be received correctly.

REMEMBER:

BE ASSERTIVE

RESPECT YOURSELF

IDENTIFY YOUR OWN NEEDS/WANTS

LEARN TO SAY “NO”

CAUTION: THINKING TRAPS!!!

CATASTROPHISING

You believe what you experienced, or will experience in the future, will be or is so overwhelming that you can't/won't be able to cope at all ie; *"There will be no point living if I fail my exams."*

FORTUNE TELLING

You start to predict the future in a negative way ie: *"I'm going to fail my exams."*

BLAMING

You do not take responsibility for how you are feeling, instead you attribute your negative thoughts to others ie; *"It's my parents fault that I'm feeling this way."*

LABELLING

You put global negative traits on yourself and others ie; *"I'm not loveable."*

OVER-GENERALISING

You view situations negatively based on one single event ie; *"I always fail at things."*

MIND READING

You automatically think that you know what others think about you without any solid evidence ie; *"She thinks I'm odd."*

WHAT IF?

You increase your anxiety by not answering your "what if" questions ie; *"What if I have a panic attack in public?"*

BLACK & WHITE THINKING

You think in the 'all or nothing' category ie; *"Everything I do is always wrong."*

EMOTIONAL REASONING

You let how you feel determine your reality ie; *"I feel low therefore I'm not fully prepared for my exam."*

UNFAIR COMPARISONS

You compare yourself to others without knowing their coping skills or how much time, effort or ability they devote to a subject/situation ie; *"Everyone else is able to cope with stress."*

SHOULD

You look at things/situations how they should be instead of focussing on what they actually are at present ie; *"I should get a first in my degree, if I don't then I'm a failure."*

SITUATIONAL ASSOCIATION

You automatically think that since you felt bad/ anxious in a certain place that the next time you're there you're going to feel the same way.

PERSONALISING

You automatically attribute any negative event to your own doing regardless if others are involved ie; *"I am solely to blame for the ending of my marriage."*

TIP:

If you find yourself falling into any of these thinking traps, try to look at the situation by putting a friend or family member into your situation. By using this technique it will allow you to think more rationally about your situation, therefore enabling you to come up with more solutions to help your situation instead of sabotaging yourself with negative or irrational thoughts.

MOOD DIARY

SITUATION <i>In College</i>	NEGATIVE THOUGHT <i>No-one likes me, I am not able for the course</i>	MOOD/ FEELING <i>Anxious/faint</i>	BEHAVIOUR <i>I don't talk to anyone and leave college ASAP</i>	FACTS GOING AGAINST NEGATIVE THOUGHT <i>I have friends, I got the course</i>