

# STRESS AND ANXIETY

during covid



A graphic field  
guide for adults

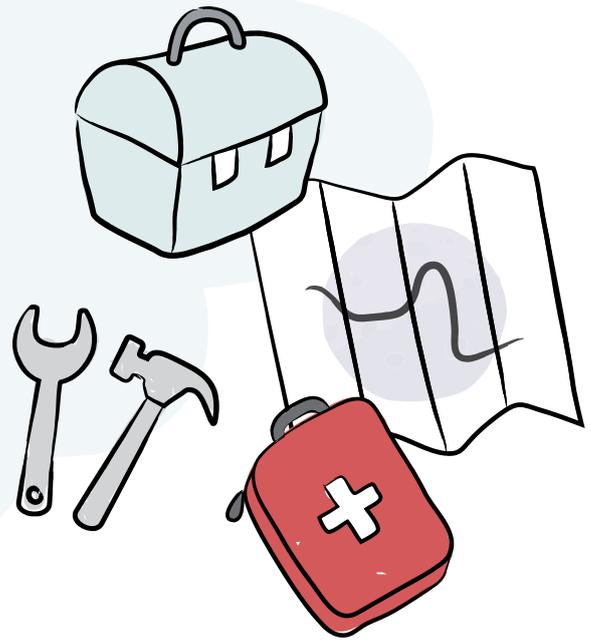
Lutza Ireland  
Dr. Cedric Chu

choose  
your own  
adventure

# Foreword

This resource is a self-help book for adults who want to understand and manage stress and anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic. It's a collaboration between psychologist and designer Lutz Ireland and general practitioner Dr Cedric Chu. Drawing on their nearly 40 years of combined experience as health practitioners and educators, they've developed a practical model for managing stress and anxiety in a range of real-life situations.

Please note that this resource is for information purposes only - it's not a substitute for professional health advice and treatment. Speak to a qualified health professional for health advice and treatment that's tailored to your specific needs.



People experience and respond to stress and anxiety in many different ways, so this is an interactive book. This means that you can:

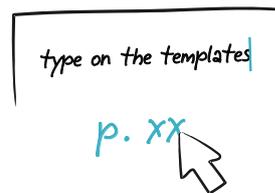
## Choose your own adventure



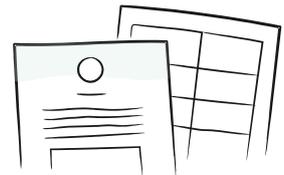
read the guide from start to finish

engage with the parts that interest you the most

## Use it in your own way



use it digitally as an interactive PDF



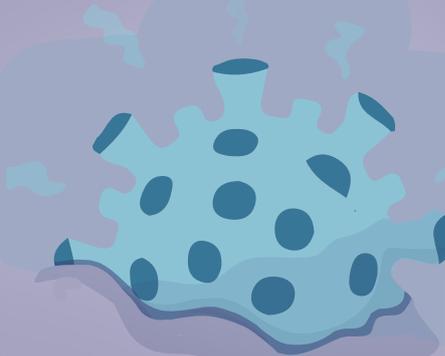
print out the pages that you'd like to physically keep or write on

1

## Get to know stress and anxiety

helps you understand the basic principles of stress and anxiety management and how to use them in general and during the pandemic

p. 5



## About the guide

p. 110

# What's inside

You can start at Module 1 or jump straight into another section that interest you. Continue on to **the next page** to see what you'll find in each section.

2

## Get to know your stress and anxiety

helps you understand and explore your own and other people's unique experiences and responses to stressful situations

p. 16



3

## Pack your bag of tools

introduces different tools and how to use them

p. 44



## 1

## Get to know stress and anxiety

---

introduction	5
stress and anxiety during COVID	6
what's good about stress and anxiety?	8
how can i use stress and anxiety to deal with covid?	10
how do stress and anxiety work?	11
phases of anxiety	12
summary	15

## 2

## Get to know your stress and anxiety

---

introduction	16
your 4 bodies	17
physical body	18
inner body	25
expressive body	32
acting body	38
summary	43

## 3

## Pack your bag of tools

---

introduction	44
your tools	45
how to practice your tools	100
how to pack your bag of tools	103
summary	109

about the authors	110
about the guide	111
acknowledgements	112
copyright and licensing	113
references	114



# Get to know stress and anxiety

In this section we talk about how stress and anxiety can be used to your advantage. We introduce stress and anxiety to explain their unique functions and how they work. Understanding what stress and anxiety is supposed to do for you and how they build up can help you understand how to best manage them.

stress and anxiety during COVID	p. 6
what's good about stress and anxiety?	p. 8
how can i use stress and anxiety to deal with covid?	p. 10
how do stress and anxiety work?	p. 11
phases of anxiety	p. 12

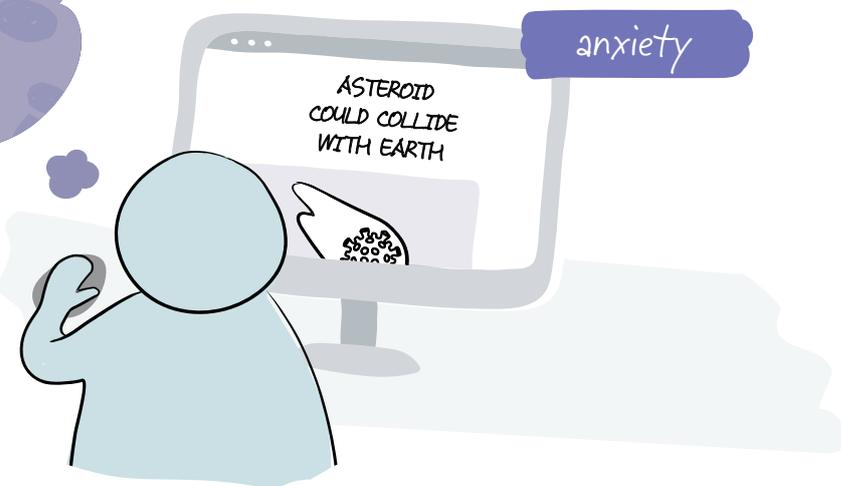
# Stress and anxiety during COVID

In this book, we look at stress and anxiety as essential tools that help you live your best life if you know how to use them. During a pandemic your best life is likely to look very different from your best life if there's no pandemic and you won the lottery. Still, once you learn how to use stress and anxiety wisely, you can use them to better any situation.



Stress is fear generated by a known immediate threat, like an asteroid hurtling towards earth. It gets you ready for quick action, like taking cover or running away.

Anxiety is generated by a potential future threat, like knowing that an asteroid might, one day, collide with earth. Anxiety gives you foresight to know that something may go wrong so you can prepare in advance. Neat!



How are stress and anxiety useful? Ultimately, they let you know that there's a potential threat and get you ready to deal with it.

## COVID anxiety

In the case of a pandemic, you might feel anxious over the idea of leaving the house, imagining that a COVID carrying stranger could sneeze in your direction.



If you go to the supermarket and a person sneezes near you, feeling stress can help you react: you may jump back to avoid the droplets.

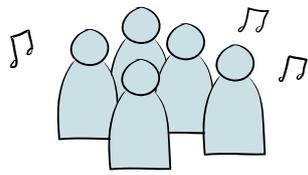
There are some things that make it hard to benefit from stress and anxiety:

## 1 Stress and anxiety are not proportionate to the level of threat.

### Too low:

you don't care enough to do anything about a threat so you're at risk

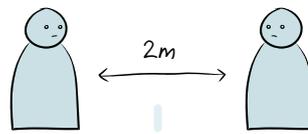
e.g. partying during lockdown



### Mid-range:

high enough to get a boost so you can take the extra step of planning and protecting yourself

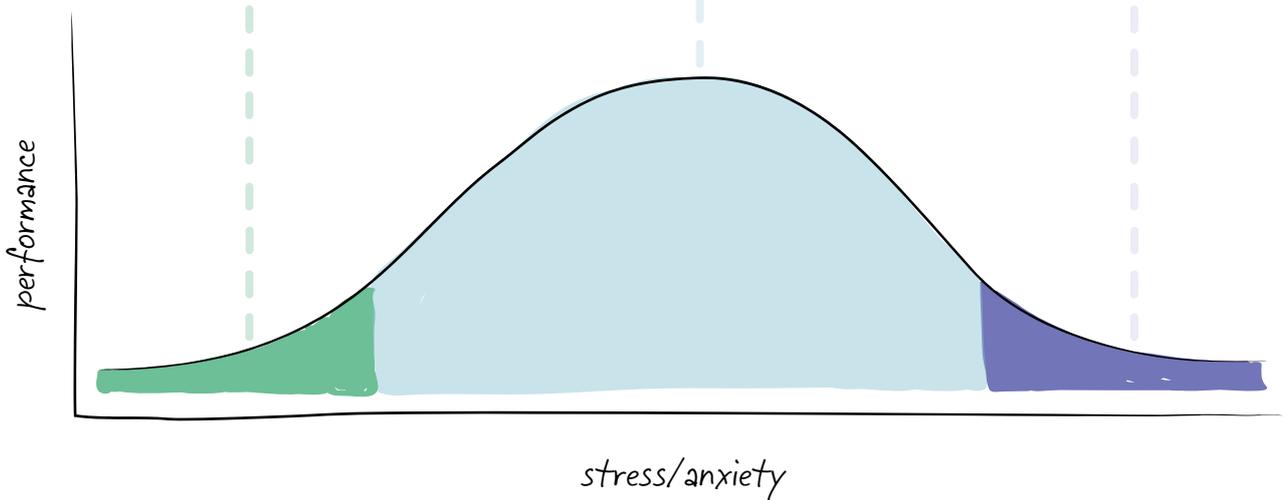
e.g. social distancing



### Too high:

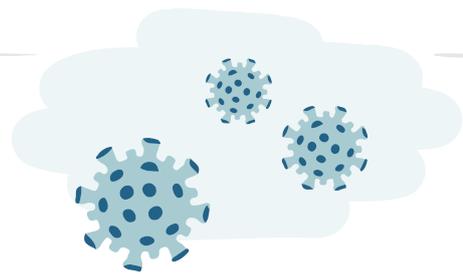
we are too overwhelmed to be effective.

e.g. staying in bed



## 2 The threat is long term

if a threat is short term (seconds or days), stress and anxiety give a boost to do your best, then let you rest so you recoup the extra energy expended. When it's long term, we keep expanding energy to deal with a threat, and don't get a chance to recover.



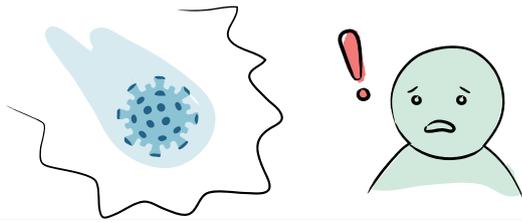
## 3 The threat is undefined

if you know and understand the threat, you can choose the best course of action to protect yourself. If the threat is unknown, invisible or unpredictable, we can't be sure that we are safe, so we keep being switched on.

# What's good about stress and anxiety?

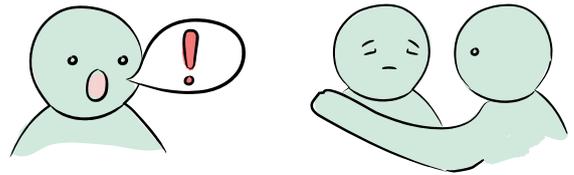
Stress and anxiety might feel, well, stressful, but they play important roles in our lives. Here's what they do:

## Anxiety can communicate to you



Stress and anxiety are like alarm systems. They're signals that let you know there's a threat to you, your loved ones or something that's important to you. If you're not aware of danger, you can't react to it.

## Anxiety can communicate to others



If you look anxious, you're showing people around you that you feel under threat. This can cue them to help you or comfort you. It can also alert them to danger, so they can react to it.

## Anxiety can organise action



Anxiety changes your body and mind so you can identify a threat and protect yourself and others. Stress and anxiety activate what's called the **'fight-flight-freeze'** response. This is the threat response system that has evolved in animals and humans over many years of evolution. It dates back to prehistoric times, when most of the threats we faced were physical, like facing off against a wild animal.





fight

If we feel like we have a reasonable chance of overcoming a threat, we fight it.



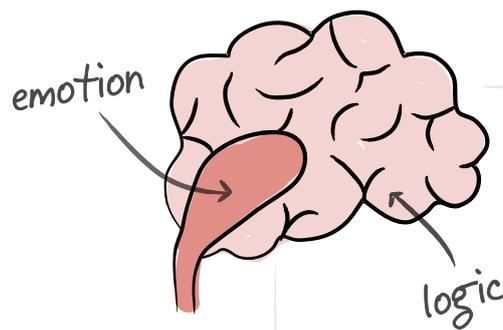
flight

If the threat seems stronger than us, we run away from it to avoid getting hurt.



freeze

If the threat is so overwhelming that we can't fight it or run away from it, we freeze. This means we slow down our physical and mental processes to save energy.



### The emotional brain

The fight-flight-freeze response is encoded in what's called the **'emotional brain'**. This is the oldest part of our brain and is the emotional control centre. The emotional brain is reactive, which means it acts on impulse and without thinking. Have you ever seen a speeding car coming towards you as you're crossing a road and jumped out of its way (a flight response) without even thinking about it? That's your emotional brain - it's very useful for quick action. Ever heard those stories about people who suddenly have superhuman strength and can lift a whole car off a child? That's the emotional brain, too.

But the emotional brain is also impulsive. This means that the fight-flight-freeze response doesn't always match the level of threat. For example, you might freeze or run away from something you can handle instead of confronting it, or you might fight something dangerous instead of walking away.

### The thinking brain

As human brains evolved and we became more physically safe in our environment, many threats began to need a problem-solving approach rather than a physical one. So our **'thinking brain'** developed - the part of the brain that lets us think logically, reason, plan, make wise decisions, learn and control our emotions.

Usually, the emotional brain and thinking brain work together. Think of them as an egg: the yolk and egg white are both important. But the more danger you think you're in, the more your emotional brain takes over. Even if the threat can't be dealt with physically, your body might gear up to fight-flight-freeze, which means logical thinking and problem-solving don't get much say. This isn't a conscious choice, but an automatic reaction. You can learn to manage this kind of reaction (*see tools on p. 45*), but remember - it just means your body is looking out for you.

# How can I use stress and anxiety to deal with COVID?

Stress and anxiety can actually help you deal with COVID. Remember, stress and anxiety are trying to **communicate to you**. Their job is to signal a threat. In a pandemic, this threat can take various forms: infection, job loss, loss of connection, loss of certainty. It's natural to feel stressed and anxious when you become aware of these things. But these feelings aren't useful unless you follow them with action.

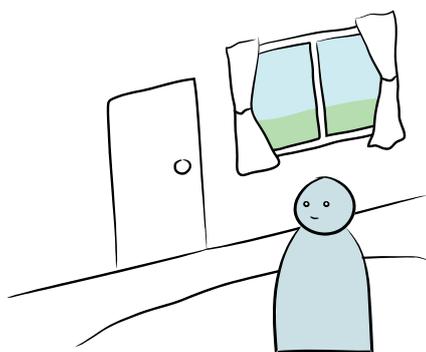
Remember that stress and anxiety are also trying to **communicate to others**. As humans, we have a better chance of handling threat if we stick together (even we can't do that physically right now). Call on others for help - friends, family, professionals or organisations.

**Organise and act** to keep yourself and your loved ones safe. Focus on yourself first and you'll then be in the best position to help others. Some examples of useful fight-flight-freeze reactions include:



## Fighting is tackling a problem

You can do this with problem-solving and preparing. Ask yourself what you can do about your stressors. Some things are outside your control, but others aren't. Focus on these and how you can change them or prepare for them. If you can't change the problem, you can change your response to it. As the serenity prayer says, 'God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference'. This is easier said than done, so use our handy tools to help.



## Flight is avoiding risk of infection

Follow public health guidelines to lower transmission: limit contact with others, practise social distancing, wash your hands, don't touch your face, wear protective gear.

## Freezing is conserving energy

If you have too much going on - maybe you're sick or have too much on your plate right now - focus on getting through the tough times as best you can. Stick to the basic priorities to keep going. You'll do more when you can, don't put pressure on yourself.

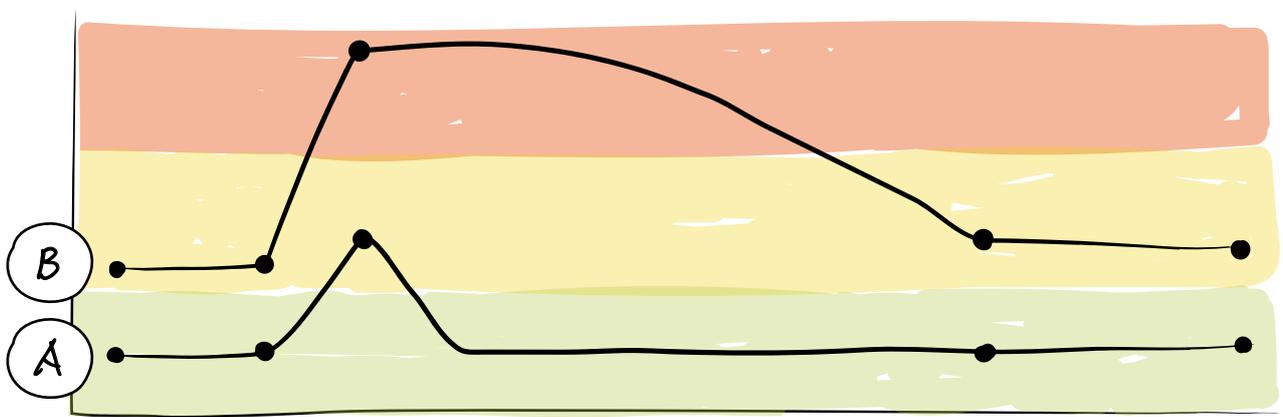


# How do stress and anxiety work?

Every person has their own experience of stress and anxiety. The same person will also experience stress and anxiety differently at different times.



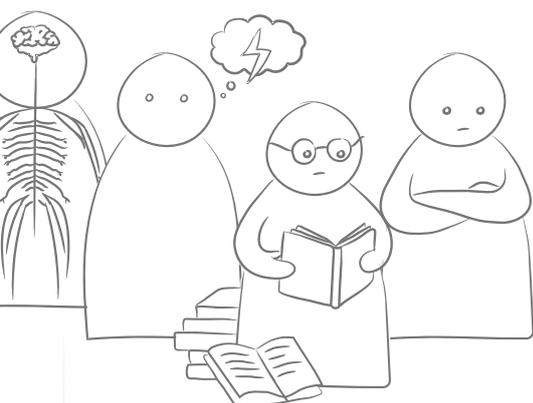
## intensity and duration



person **A** has low stress and anxiety to begin with. When something happens to make them anxious, they can easily manage it. When the threat is gone, Person A doesn't feel anxious anymore.

person **B** has mid- to high-level stress and anxiety. When they feel anxious, it happens quickly and intensely. When the threat is gone, it takes Person B a long time to stop feeling anxious. Their higher anxiety levels could be caused by genetics, personality and life experiences.

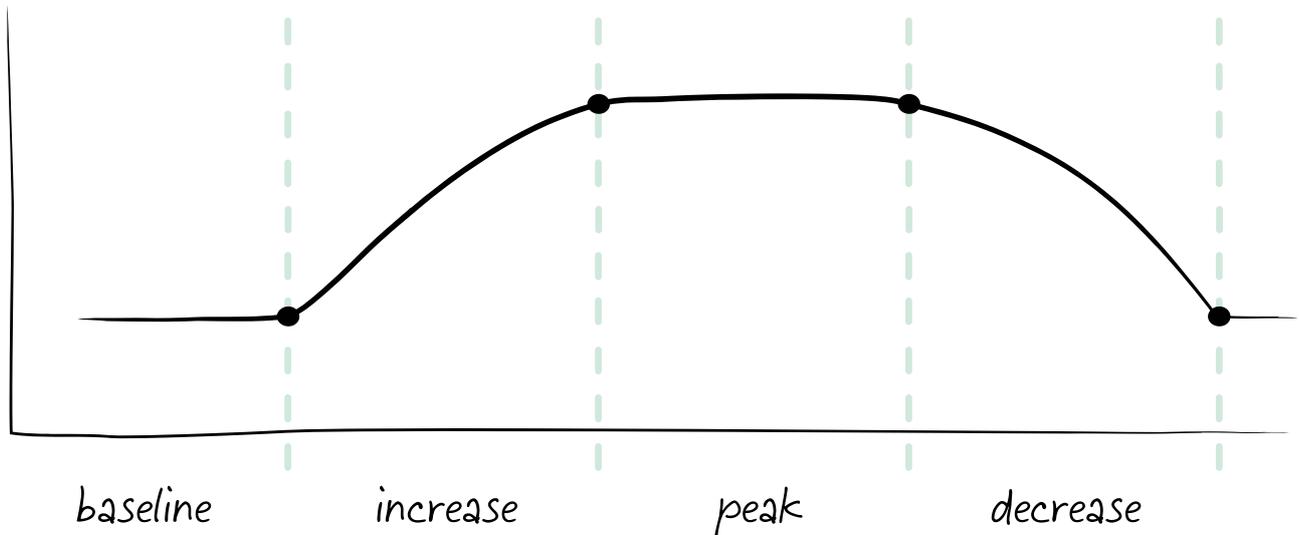
## experiences, expressions and actions



Anxiety has visible and invisible aspects. Anxiety affects our physical experiences, inner experiences, and how we express ourselves with words, body language, facial expressions and actions. Some people have a strong physical experience of anxiety, with little or no anxious thoughts or emotions. Others have a more emotional experience of anxiety, without much physical response. Some people have obvious expressions and behaviours when they feel anxious; others may hardly show these feelings.

# Phases of anxiety

Stress and anxiety have three different phases: anxiety increase, anxiety peak and anxiety decrease. These phases influence how you experience and manage stress and anxiety. In this section, we'll explain what happens in each phase.



## baseline

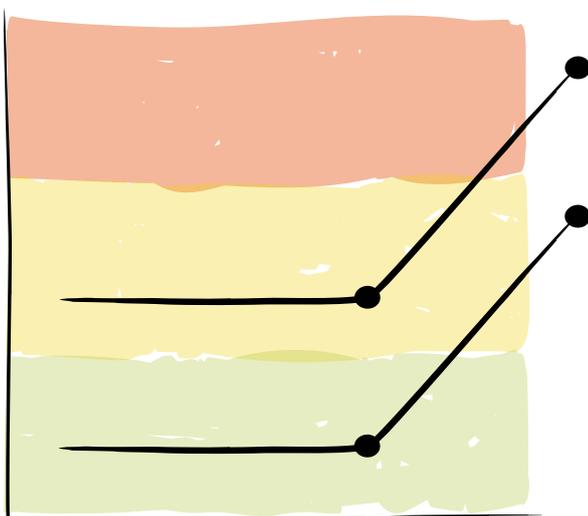
Your baseline is how you feel in general, think of it as your normal walking pace. It's influenced by many different inside and outside factors:



**Inside factors:** What's going for your body and mind in general - for example, quality sleep, good nutrition, illness, wellness etc.



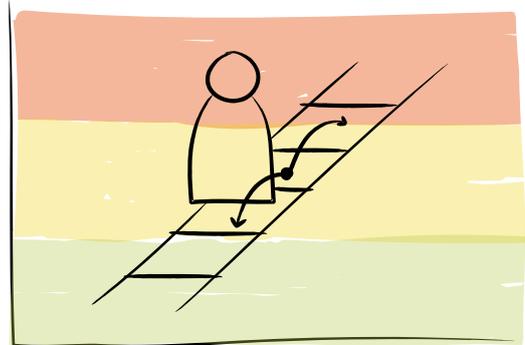
**Outside factors:** What's going on in the world - for example, the pandemic, access to healthcare, employment, housing, inclusion, discrimination, racism, how much support you have from friends, family, community and government etc.



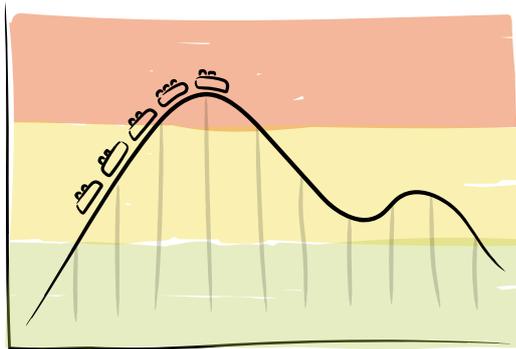
The more stressful your inside and outside worlds are, the higher your baseline. And the higher your baseline, the more vulnerable you are to intense experiences of stress and anxiety.

## increase

Anxiety often has a build-up phase. Sometimes it's easy to spot when it starts rising, but sometimes, you might not realise how high it's become until it's way up there. Think of this rising anxiety as like being in a speeding car heading straight to Panictown: the earlier you notice you're in the driver's seat, the easier it is to hit the brakes. That's why it's important to be aware of how your anxiety builds up: if you know when and how it is rising, you can manage it before it gets too high.



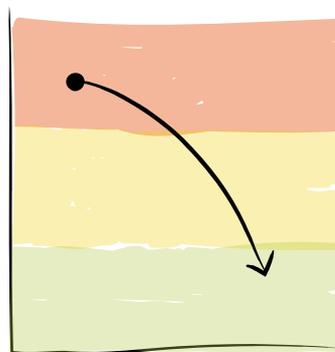
## peak



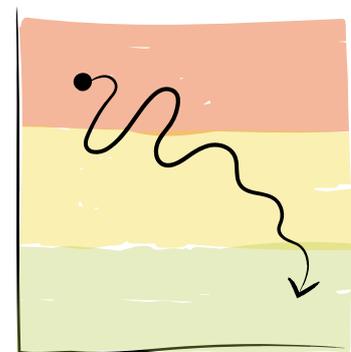
Anxiety has a peak. Once it reaches its peak, it won't stay there for very long - usually minutes or even seconds, like when you teeter on the highest drop of a rollercoaster. You've probably had times when you've felt like your anxiety isn't going down no matter what you do, but remember: it will go down. Your body regulates itself, so you won't be stuck at the top of that rollercoaster drop forever.

## decrease

High anxiety doesn't feel great - when you've reached a peak, you'll want to come down right away. But anxiety ebbs and flows, and it might take 20 or 90 minutes to return to baseline. You can find tools for problem solving and decreasing your anxiety in [Section 3 \(p. 45\)](#).

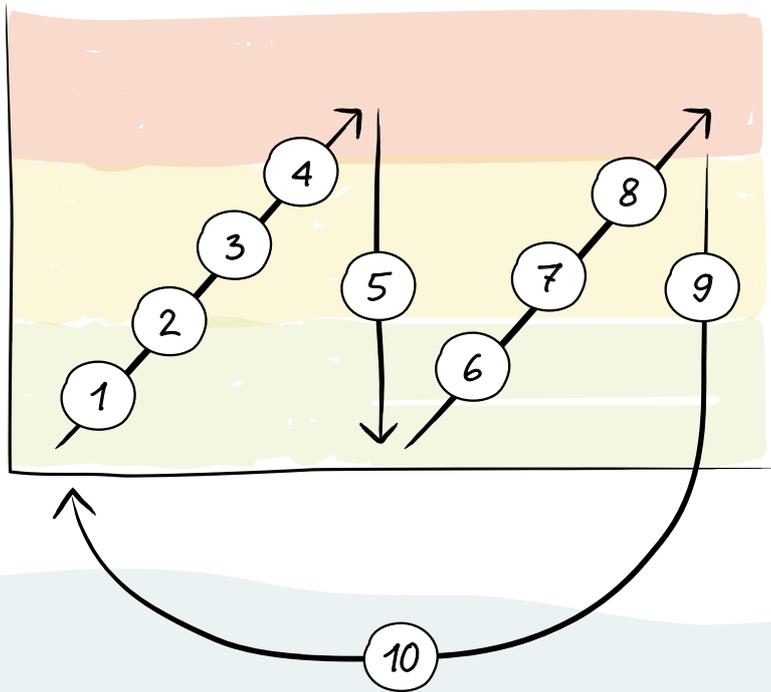


what we'd like



what may happen

# Vicious cycles



When anxiety doesn't go down as fast as you'd like, it's tempting to turn to 'quick fixes' - drugs, alcohol, avoiding dealing with what's made you anxious in the first place, or trying to control things we can't control. Sound familiar? It's natural to want a quick fix, but it doesn't tend to work. Avoiding dealing with a problem is like putting a band-aid on a cut that needs stitches. If you don't attend to the wound, it can become worse. If you don't solve a problem that needs to be solved, it's going to create more stress in the long run. Plus, you may have the added stress of feeling guilty or overwhelmed about how you handled the anxiety.

**example:**  
over-researching information



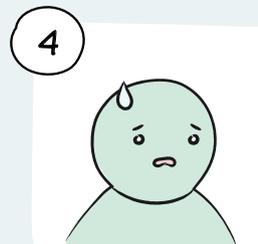
Not sure how to best manage the pandemic



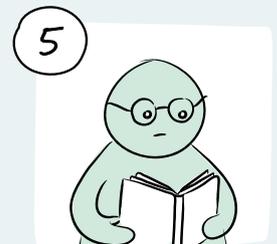
Am I doing everything I can?



Maybe there's something useful I'm missing?



I need to be up to date



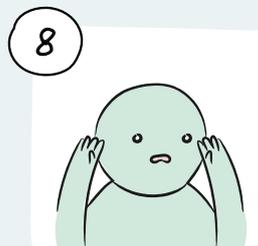
Researching info, feeling more prepared



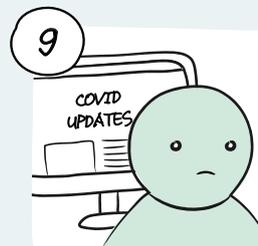
There's so much information



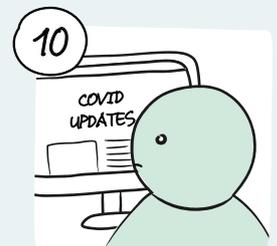
I don't know what to believe



This is overwhelming



I need to stay offline



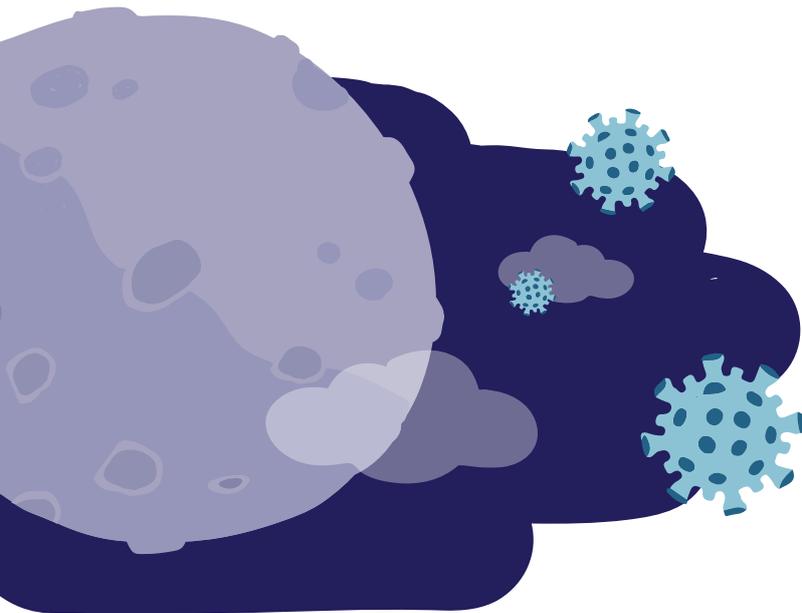
But I may be missing something...

# Summary

In this section we talked about how stress and anxiety work.

- They have very important functions to help you keep safe by letting you or others know that there is a potential threat and get you ready to deal with the threat
- The pandemic can increase stress and anxiety because the threat is invisible and unpredictable (at this point) so we can't be certain how to eliminate the threat
- Stress and anxiety work best when they're high enough for you to take the threat seriously, but not so high that you feel overwhelmed
- People experience stress and anxiety differently; and even the same person can have different experiences at different times, so we need different tools for different times
- Stress and anxiety have different phases: baseline, increase, peak and decrease. The way you manage each phase can impact your overall experiences of stress and anxiety.

Ireland and Chu © 2020



Now that you know all about stress and anxiety, choose your own adventure:



get to know your own stress and anxiety

p. 15



have a look at tools to manage stress and anxiety

p. 43

let us know what you think!

We'd like to know your opinion on this guide to help us develop better resources in the future! Follow the links for an anonymous online survey - it takes about 5 minutes to fill out.

i'm an individual

i'm a health professional

Ireland and Chu © 2020

# 2

## Get to know your stress and anxiety

Your anxiety is more than just a feeling. Stress and anxiety build up in many different parts of your body and mind. Everyone gets stressed and anxious sometimes, but we don't all experience and manage anxiety the same way. Understanding your anxiety will help you manage it better.

This section is built around four aspects of your anxiety, and these are represented by different bodies.

Each body has:

- An introduction
- Examples of experiences
- Explanation of experiences
- Recommended tools



your 4 bodies p. 17

physical body p. 18

inner body p. 25

expressive body p. 32

acting body p. 38

# Your 4 bodies

Everyone experiences stress and anxiety in unique ways. People often think anxiety is about worrying, but it's more complicated. Anxiety is an experience that impacts how you feel physically, how you feel inside, how you express yourself and how you act. To understand the different facets of your anxiety, let's imagine you have four bodies.



## Physical

The **physical body** is what we usually mean by 'body': it's your brain, nervous system, organs, muscles and so on

tense jaw dry mouth  
goose bumps headaches  
sweating lightheaded  
pupils dilating diarrhea

pg. 18

## Inner

The **inner body** is your inner world, such as your thoughts and feelings

catastrophising worried  
panicking on edge  
feeling unreal irritable  
denial racing thoughts  
impulsive

pg. 25

## Expressive

The **expressive body** is your expressions that other people can see

darting eyes fidgeting  
nail biting  
trembling crying  
immobile bored  
crossing arms

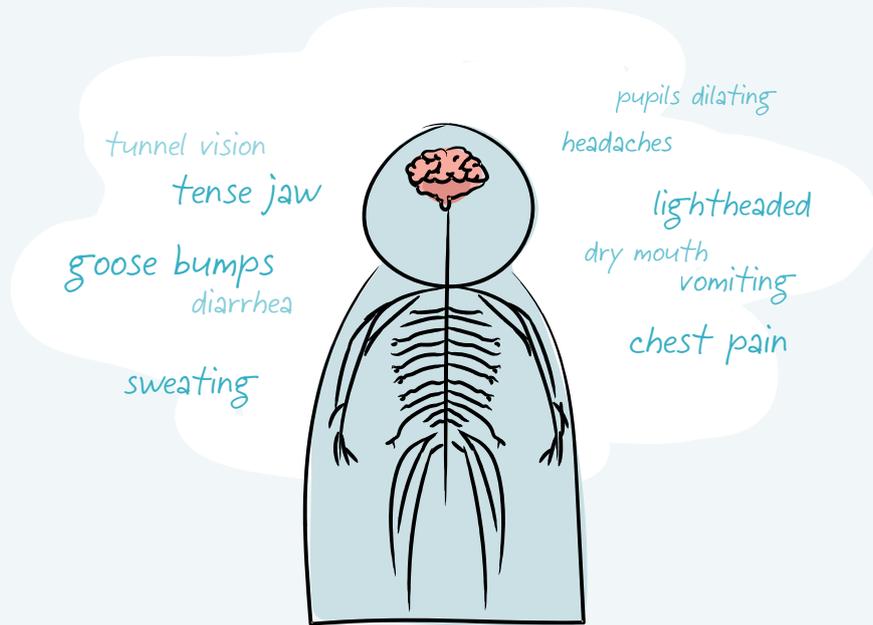
pg. 32

## Acting

The **acting body** is how you use your body to act

over planning nit-picking  
obsessing withdrawing  
procrastinating  
controlling researching

pg. 38



## Physical body

Your physical body is your 'flesh-and-blood' body, like your brain, nervous system, organs, muscles and so on. The main role of stress and anxiety in your physical body is to help you deal with danger. Think of them as security guards: when they sense a threat, they get your body ready to attack (fight), escape (flight) or preserve energy (freeze). Even if threats are not physical, your body keeps getting ready for action anyway. So, although you may feel some uncomfortable experiences, they mean your body is looking out for you

See common physical reactions to anxiety

p. 19

Find out why these reactions are occurring

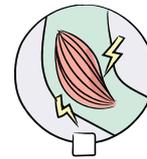
p. 20

See tools that help with physical experiences

p. 24

# Physical body experiences

## muscular system

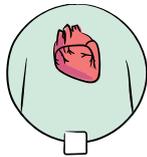


feeling sore



muscle tension

## Cardio-vascular system



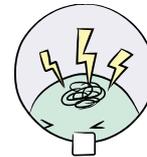
heart quickens



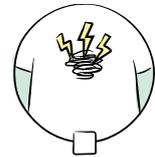
breathing quickens



shaking and trembling



headaches



chest pain, tightness or discomfort



shortness of breath



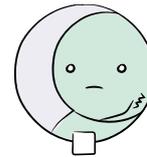
chest pain, tightness or discomfort



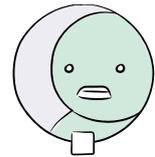
fatigued and tired



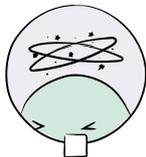
numbness and tingling



tense jaw



clenched teeth



lightheaded and dizzy



sweat



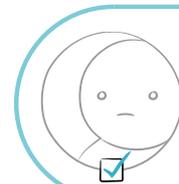
flush or blush



cold hands and feet



turning pale



tick the boxes that apply to you

p. 20

p. 21

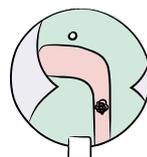
## digestive system



stomach aches



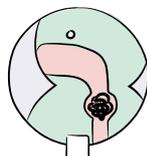
butterflies in the stomach



difficulty swallowing



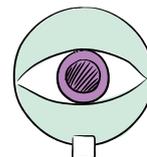
dry mouth



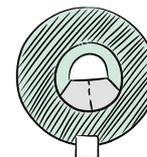
choking feeling or lump in throat



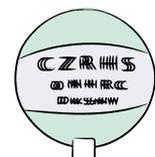
bladder urgency



pupils dilate



tunnel vision



blurry vision

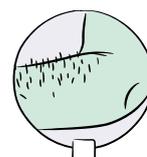


diarrhea

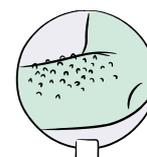
p. 23



nausea or vomiting



hair stands on end



goose bumps

p. 24



sleep difficulties

follow the page numbers to discover why these experiences are happening

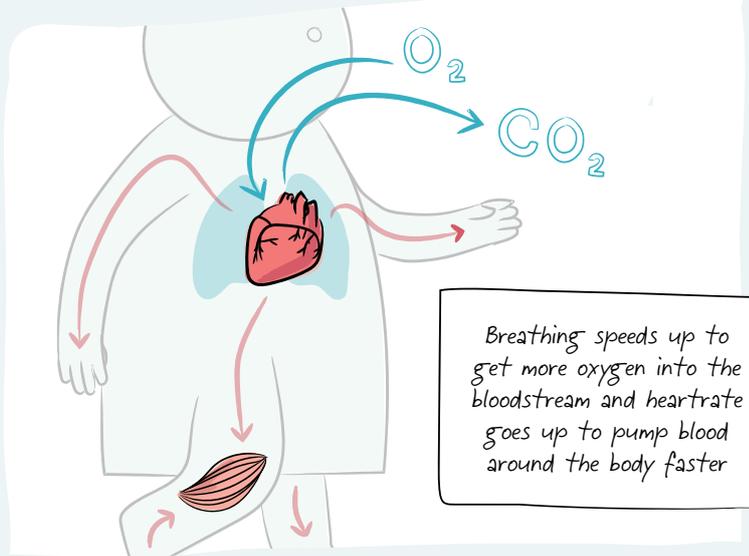
to find relevant tools to help you deal with these reactions, head to p. 25

# Physical body explained

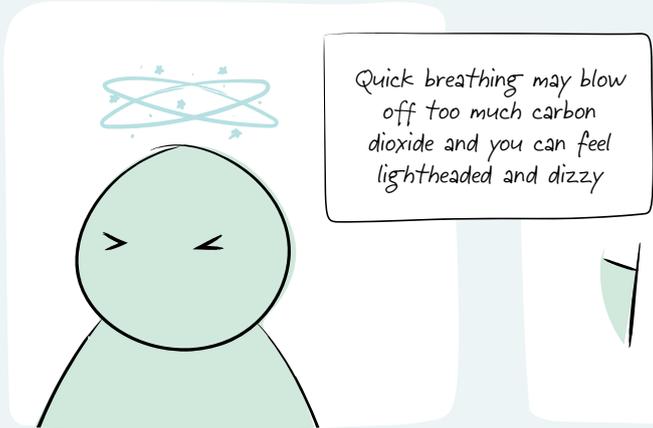
This section explains your physical experiences and shows how the fight, flight and freeze response tries to protect you. In the prehistoric days, when the brain spotted a threat, it sent signals to the nervous system through the vagus nerve to turn on the fight, flight or freeze response.



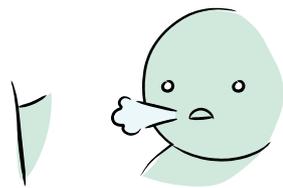
For fight or flight, our brain, senses and large muscles need more oxygen and nutrients



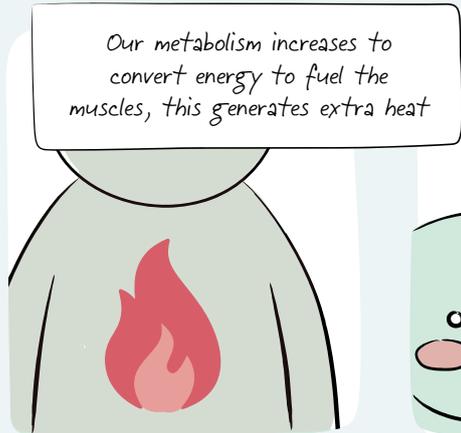
Breathing speeds up to get more oxygen into the bloodstream and heartrate goes up to pump blood around the body faster



Quick breathing may blow off too much carbon dioxide and you can feel lightheaded and dizzy

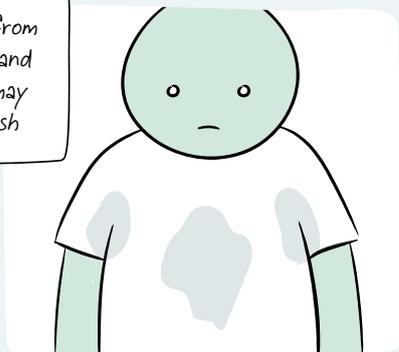
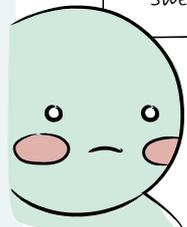


The changes in heartrate and breathing can cause chest pain, tightness, or discomfort, shortness of breath and fatigue



Our metabolism increases to convert energy to fuel the muscles, this generates extra heat

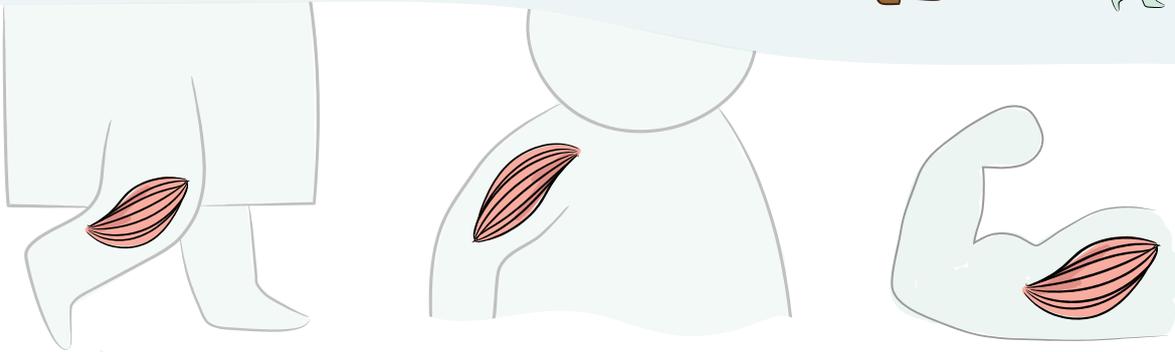
To let off the heat from increased metabolism and muscle tension, we may sweat, flush or blush



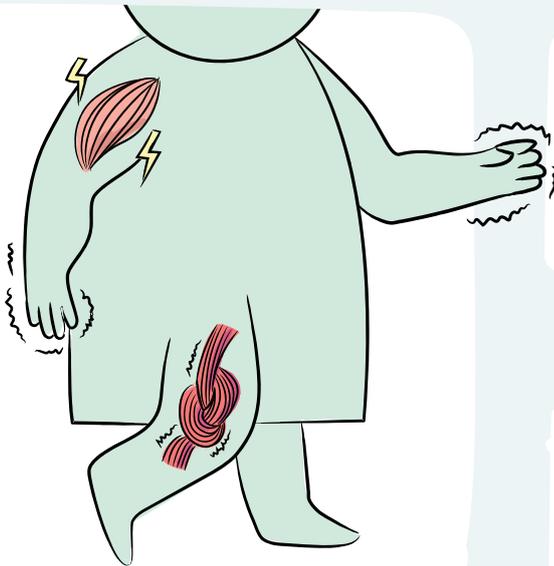
Continue to the next page to learn more about why we have physical reactions to stress and anxiety

Discover what you can do about these reactions

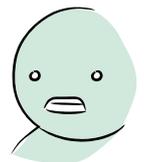
# Physical body explained



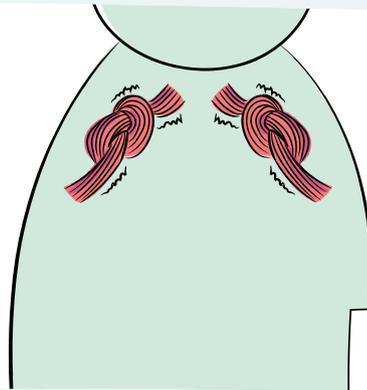
Our large muscles activate to become stronger, faster and more reactive to fight or run better



This may cause muscle tension and feeling sore or shaking and trembling



Muscle tension may lead to chest pain, tightness, or discomfort, tense jaw or clenched teeth



Tense muscles in the back, neck and shoulders can cause headaches



To make up for the stronger blood flow in the larger muscles, blood is taken away from other places that are less important for fight or running. This can lead to cold hands and feet, numbness and tingling and turning pale

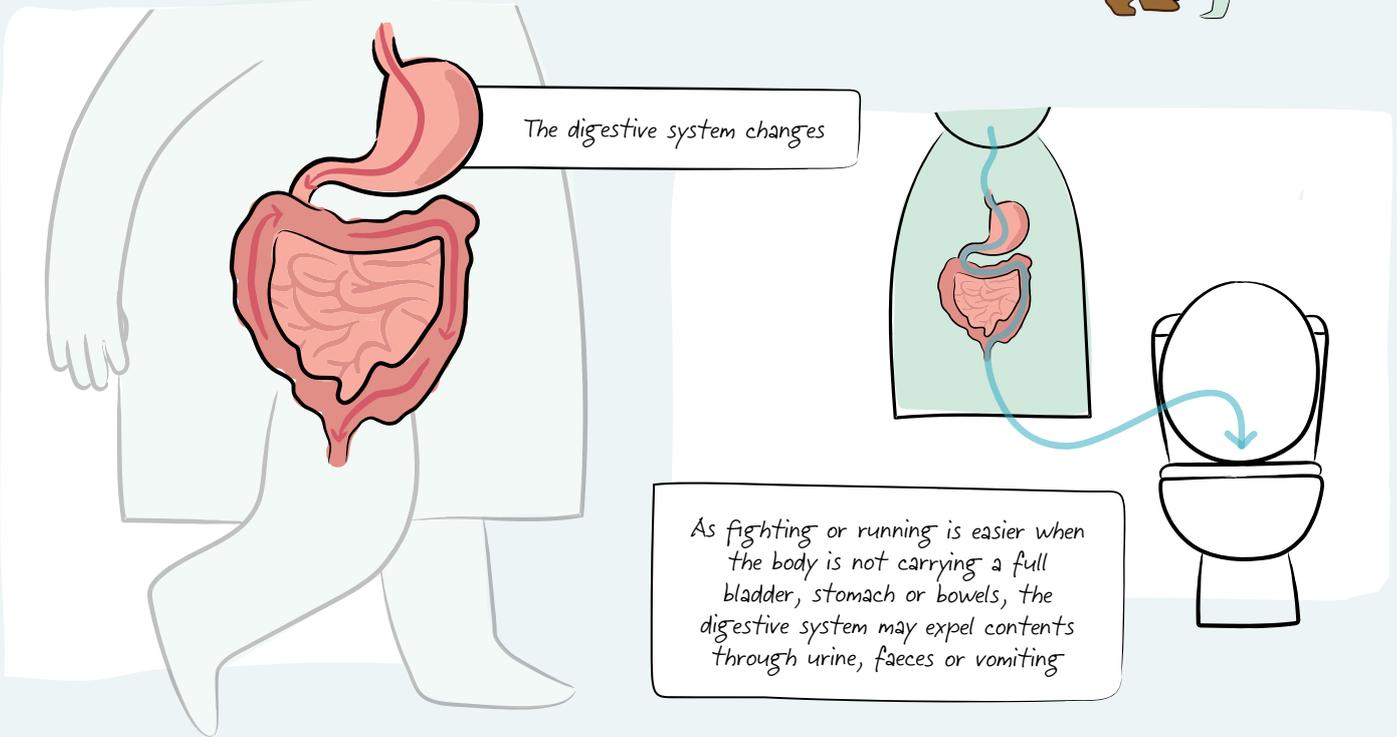
Ireland and Chu © 2020

[View all common physical experiences](#)

Continue to the next page to learn more about why we have physical reactions to stress and anxiety

[Discover what you can do about these reactions](#)

# Physical body explained

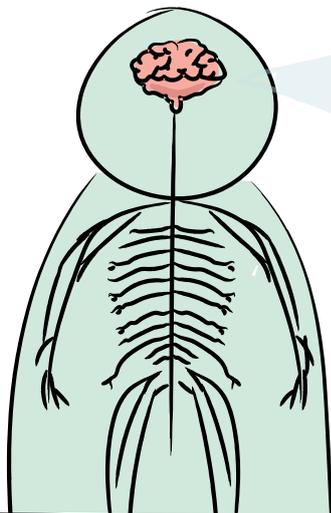


This may cause bladder urgency, diarrhea, nausea or vomiting

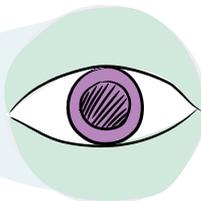
Saliva production slows down as digestion slows down, which can cause dry mouth, difficulty swallowing, choking feeling or lump in the throat

These changes can feel like stomach aches or butterflies in the stomach

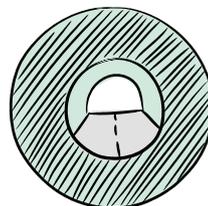
# Physical body explained



The nervous system becomes more sensitive to speed up the messaging between body and brain. Our senses become sharper



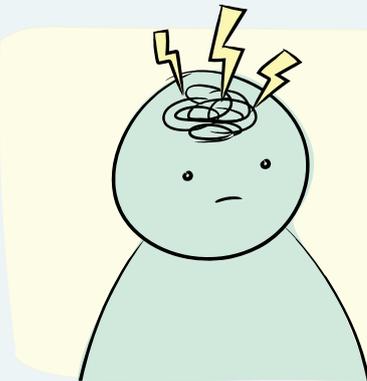
Our pupils dilate to let light in and help see better



Focus narrows as tunnel vision can lock onto a target or an escape route



Over time our peripheral vision increases to see danger better in our surroundings

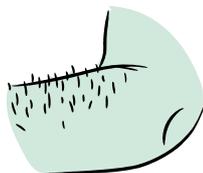


These vision changes may cause blurry vision, dizziness, sensitivity to light, or headaches from eye strain

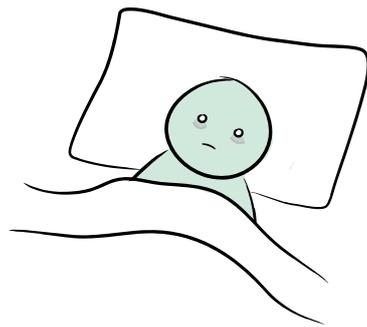
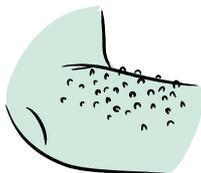


Hearing increases to better hear the danger, which may lead to sensitivity to noise

Hair stands on end to make our sense of touch better (like a cat's whiskers) and make us seem bigger (like a porcupine)

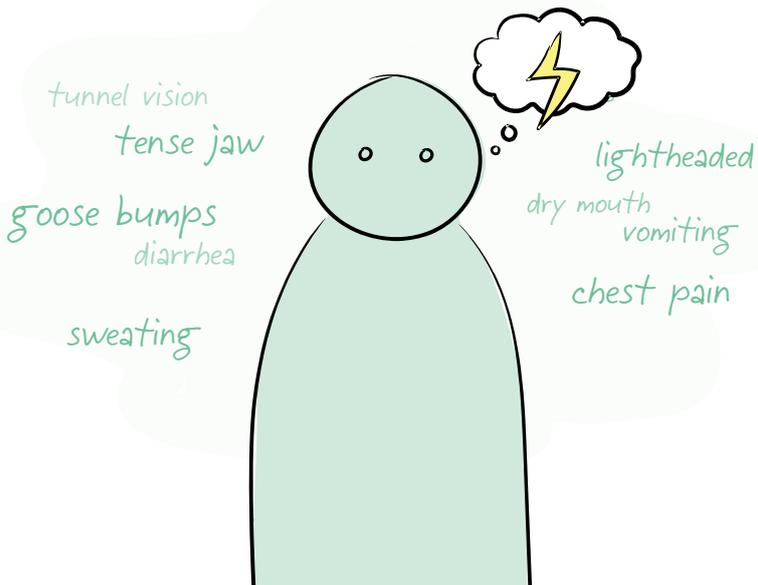


The increased activity of hair follicles can lead to goose bumps



The nervous system being on high alert can lead to sleep difficulties and feeling fatigued and tired





## Inner body

Your inner body is where your thoughts, feelings and urges live. Although your inner body is technically invisible, it's just as real as your physical body. It also has a lot of important jobs.

### feelings

Your inner experiences - 'feelings' or 'emotions' - are what happens when your brain detects changes in your **physical body** (p. 18). The job of your feelings is to act like traffic signs. And just like you know what traffic signs mean so you can drive or walk around your neighbourhood safely, you also need to know what your feelings mean so you can keep yourself safe.

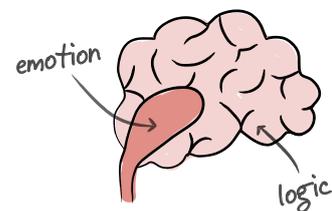
### thoughts

Stress can signal to our thinking brain that we need to think logically to understand risk and problem-solve. So you might consider different scenarios, options and perspectives to come up with the best plan to stay safe. Emotions and thoughts influence each other.

### urges

Emotions are connected to urges, which move you towards actions by making you feel like doing something. When you experience stress and anxiety, the urges you feel are based on the fight-flight-freeze response: control a threat or avoid it.

Ideally the thinking brain and emotion brain work in a balance to problem solve. When the emotion brain overtakes, the inner body may experience uncomfortable feelings, thoughts or urges. The good news is: there are many proven ways to manage the inner experiences of stress and anxiety.



See common inner reactions to anxiety

p. 26

Find out why these reactions are occurring

p. 27

See tools that help with inner experiences

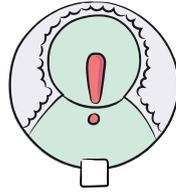
p. 31

# Inner body experiences

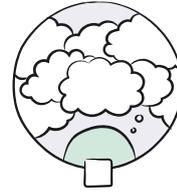
tick the boxes that apply to you



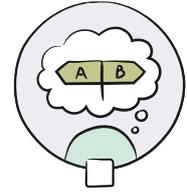
worried, nervous or stressed



worried, nervous or stressed



obsessive thoughts



feeling indecisive



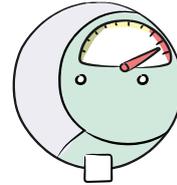
strong urge to be impulsive



restless, unable to relax



irritable and agitated



racing thoughts

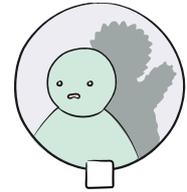


stuck on what-ifs

p. 27



difficulty concentrating



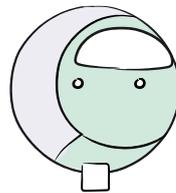
feeling paranoid



catastrophising



black-and-white thinking



blank mind

p. 28



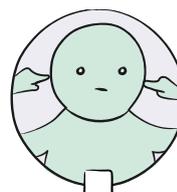
overwhelmed



panicking



distorted sense of time

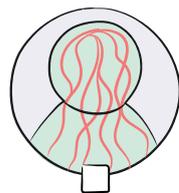


denial



disconnected from yourself

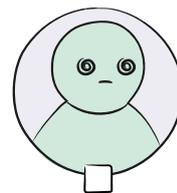
follow the page numbers to discover why these experiences are happening



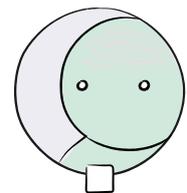
flooded with emotions



irritable and agitated



feeling unreal



numb or paralysed

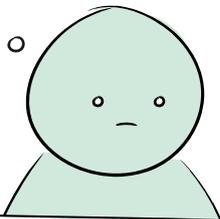
p. 29

p. 30

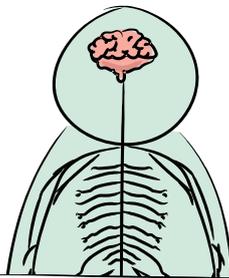
to find relevant tools to help you deal with these reactions, head to p. 31

# Inner body explained

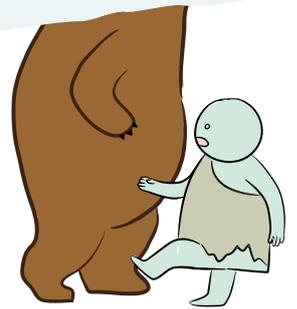
This section explains some of the common inner experiences of stress and anxiety. As our top priority is survival, the brain is wired to detect threat and respond to it. To do this, there is a cycle of thinking, feeling, and sensing, which all interact with each other. In our modern times when the threat is less physical, or is invisible and unpredictable like a pandemic, we tend to rely more on our inner processes than our bodies to deal with a threat.



As our top priority is survival, the brain is wired to detect threat and respond to it. To do this, there is a cycle of thinking, feeling, and sensing, which all interact with each other.

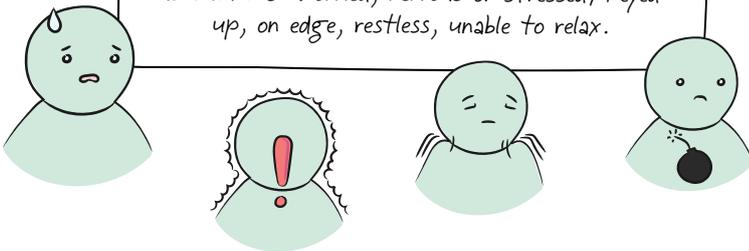


If you think there's a threat, your nervous system gears up to fight-or-flight mode.



As emotions are connected to urges, you may feel very strong urges to do something.

Your brain senses the change and translates it as emotions: worried, nervous or stressed; keyed up, on edge, restless, unable to relax.



The experience of being switched on is tiring.

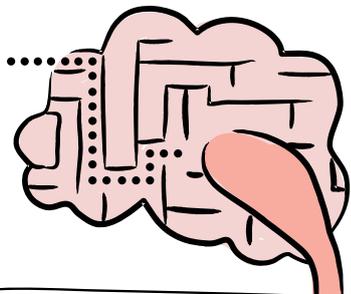


I'm feeling anxious, there must be a threat to look out for.

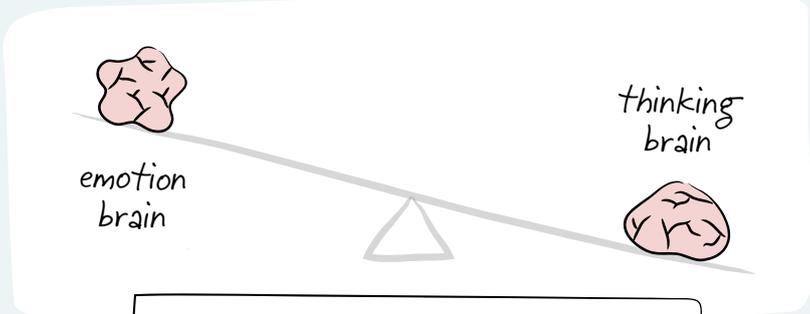
Sometimes it's the other way around: you pick up on a physical experience that gets interpreted as anxiety, then start to think about the potential threat.

Ireland and Chu © 2020

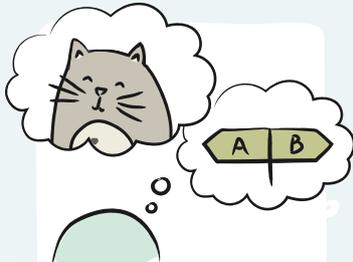
# Inner body explained



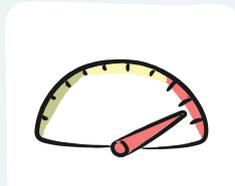
Your brain wants to protect you by planning and problem solving to find the best course of action



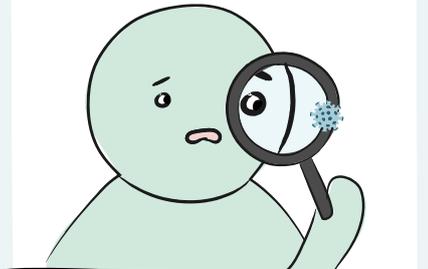
But the more anxious we get, the more the emotion brain overtakes the thinking brain



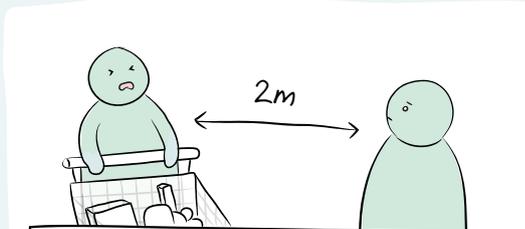
We may find it difficult to concentrate, become indecisive



The brain speeds up to work faster, but its thinking capacity may be impaired. This can cause racing thoughts and obsessing



When we are faced with uncertain or potentially dangerous situations, our minds are designed to look for threats so we can prepare for protection



Being suspicious is a way of assuming that things can be harmful, so we have better odds at getting ahead of it. Being aware of danger can be useful



Too much suspicion can turn into paranoia and make us too focussed on danger, which can be overwhelming

# Inner body explained

The brain wants to find the best option, but there's a lot to consider

Without the filter of logic, we may get lost in 'what ifs'

To manage all the information, the brain may take shortcuts: thinking in black and white without shades of grey

It might also catastrophise and focusing on worst case scenarios to prepare for the worst

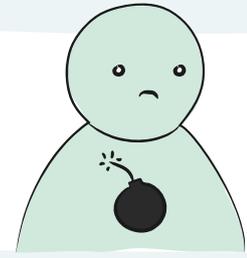
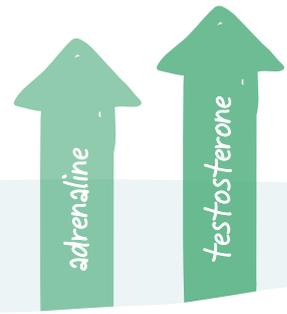
The emotion brain is the home of fight-flight-freeze response

fight-flight-freeze

If the emotion brain overtakes, we may get a blank mind or have a distorted sense of time and feel extreme emotions: panicky, flooded with emotions, and overwhelmed

## FIGHT

In 'fight' the release of extra testosterone and adrenaline can make you feel irritable and agitated



View all common inner experiences

Continue to the next page to learn more about why we have inner reactions to stress and anxiety

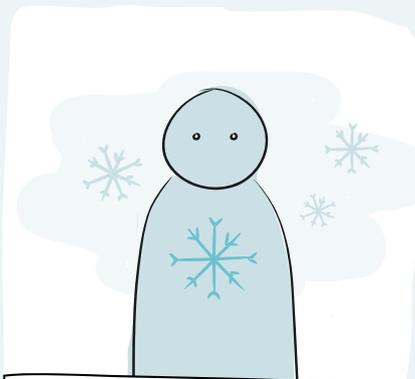
Discover what you can do about these reactions

# Inner body explained



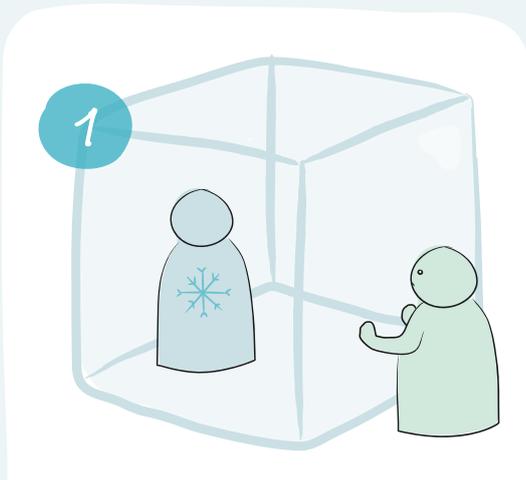
### There are three main reasons for freezing:

In this situation, the brain may disconnect (disassociate) itself from the body to shut out the pain and become numb because these sensations cause suffering and only make a bad situation worse

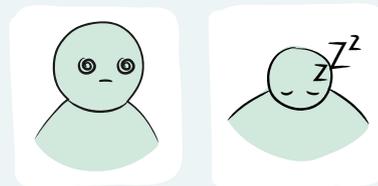


In 'freeze' the body goes for self-preservation. Freezing is a way of protecting energy so we can regather when it's safer or more effective to do so

1

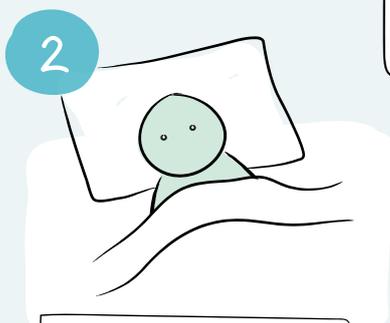


One is to shut down in a dire situation when the fight or the flight response isn't working because the threat can't be fought or escaped from



The disconnection in the freeze state may feel numb, paralysed or tired and sleepy or as if things around you or you are unreal, as in a dream or a movie

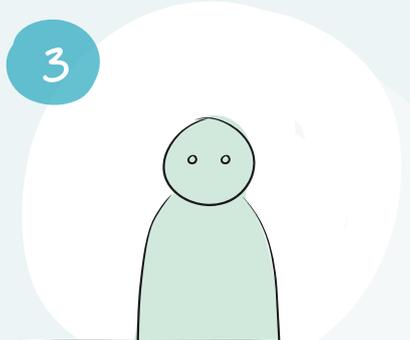
2



The second reason for freezing is exhaustion

Add a new threat like Coronavirus, we may feel like we have exhausted all options for fight and flight and simply just freeze from the overload

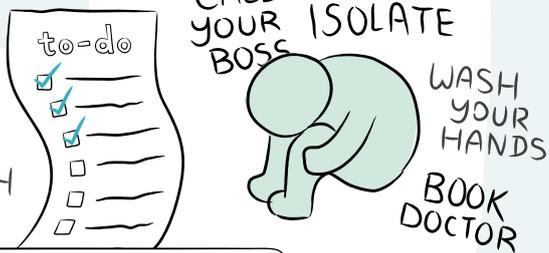
3



The third reason for freezing is a short burst 'deer in the headlights' moment when we don't know what would be best to do, so we do nothing and hope the threat didn't see us



In our modern lives many people have already been stretched too thin by dealing with the day-to-day stressors



# Inner body *what can i do?*

## Experience

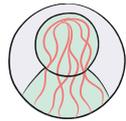
## Tool

*all inner experiences*

Lunchbox

p. 86

*Overwhelming emotions and thoughts*



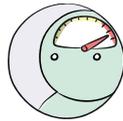
flooded with emotions



panicking



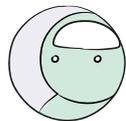
obsessive thoughts



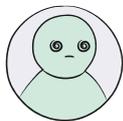
racing thoughts



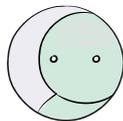
overwhelmed



blank mind



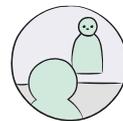
feeling unreal



numb or paralysed



distorted sense of time



disconnected from yourself

First aid kit

p. 49

*Uncomfortable thoughts*



obsessive thoughts



denial



racing thoughts



catastrophising



black-and-white thinking



stuck on what-ifs

Unglue from worry thoughts

p. 67

Scheduled worry time

p. 69

Cheerleading

p. 96

Half-smile

p. 72

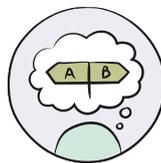
Problem solving

p. 60

To-do list

p. 75

*Indecision*



feeling indecisive

Pros and cons

p. 62

Accept or change

p. 58

Problem solving

p. 60

*Impulsiveness*



strong urge to be impulsive

Urge surfing

p. 71

Half-smile

p. 72

Pros and cons

p. 62

First aid kit

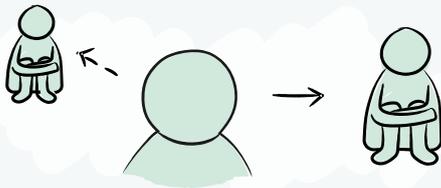
p. 49

# Expressive body

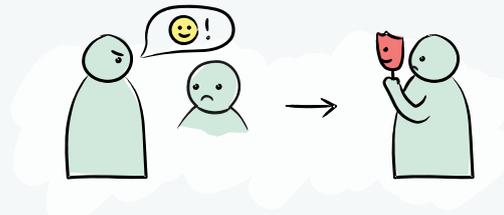
The expressive body is how you show emotions. It's the visible reactions others can see - facial expressions, hand gestures, body movements, etc. As facial and body expressions can communicate faster and better than words, the expressive body is how you let those around you know what's going on for you. The function of looking stressed and anxious is to let others know that you're afraid of something. This can move them to help, protect or comfort you, or become aware of a danger and protect themselves. However, expressing emotions can be complicated. Your expressions may or may not match how you really feel. Expressions can be influenced by many things, including:



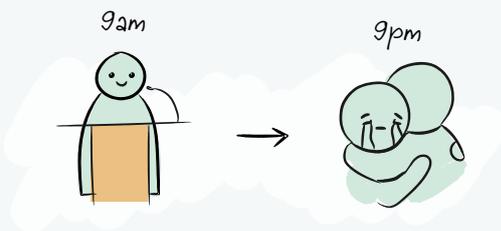
## Factors that influence your expressions



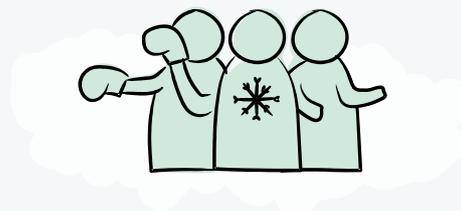
How you saw others expressing anxiety in the past



How others have reacted to your anxiety in the past



Whether an expression will make the situation better or worse



Whether your anxiety has prepared you for fight, flight or freeze mode

See common expressions related to anxiety

p. 33

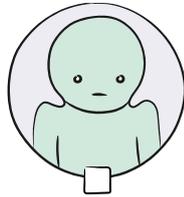
Find out why these expressions are occurring

p. 34

See tools that help with expressions

p. 37

# Expressive body experiences



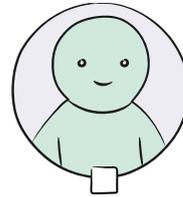
tense posture



crossing arms



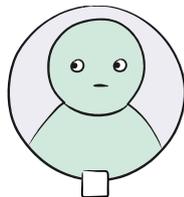
screaming/yelling



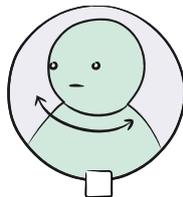
acting like everything is okay

follow the page numbers to discover why these experiences are happening

p. 34



darting eyes



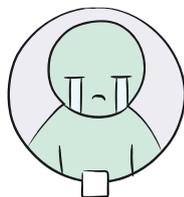
head swivelling



nail biting



fidgeting



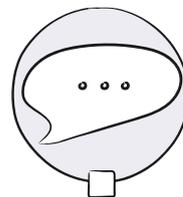
crying



shaking and trembling

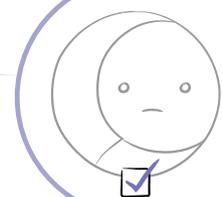


nervous, scattered speech

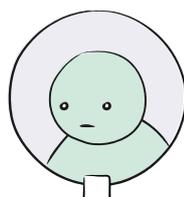


speechlessness/talking less

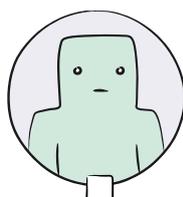
p. 35



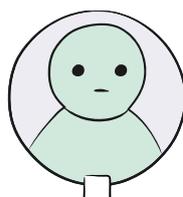
tick the boxes that apply to you



hunched or slouched posture



immobile and rigid



frozen stare



bored or spacey

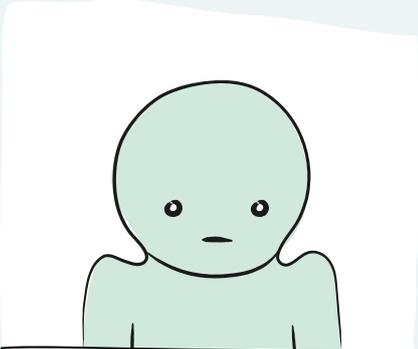
p. 36

to find relevant tools to help you deal with these reactions, head to p. 37

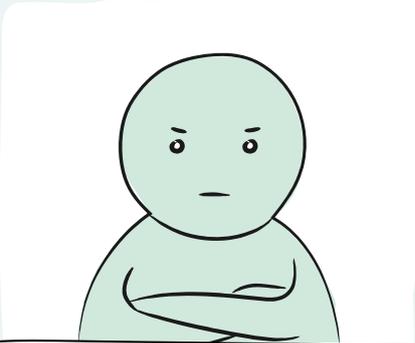
# Expressive body explained

This section explains some of the common expressions of stress and anxiety, which other people can see. Expressions can be complicated and influenced by a number of different processes in your Physical and Inner Body.

Your posture and facial expressions show how you're feeling



A tense posture shows that your muscles are activated and you're ready to defend yourself



Looking angry also signals that you're ready to defend yourself



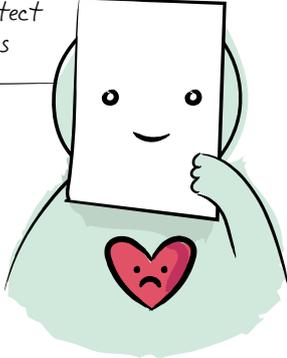
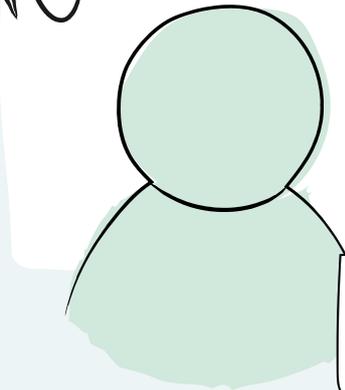
Screaming, yelling or crying lets others know that you need help



Screaming and yelling in anger can make you look strong and threatening

YELLING

If you look like everything is okay, you might be trying to protect others from your problems



This can also be a way to protect yourself if you've found in the past that sharing your problems or asking for help doesn't work

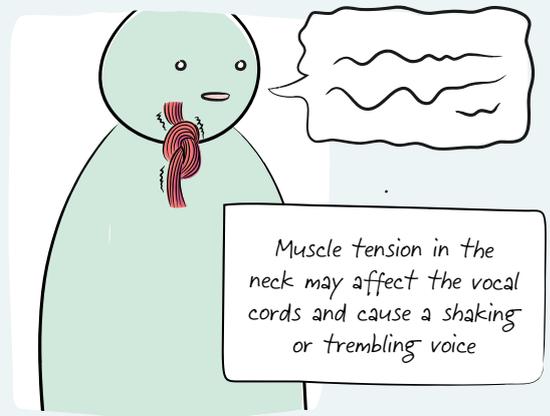
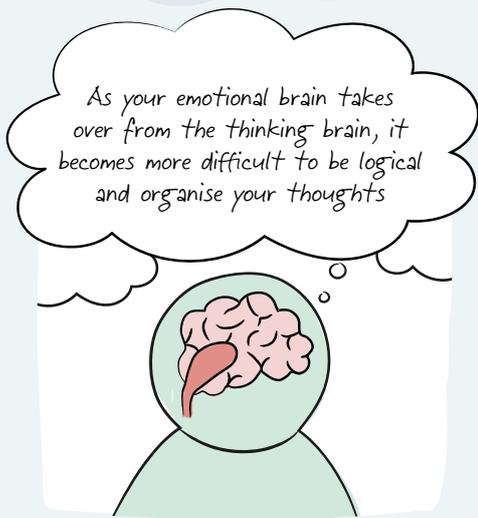


But a situation like a pandemic is too big to tackle alone

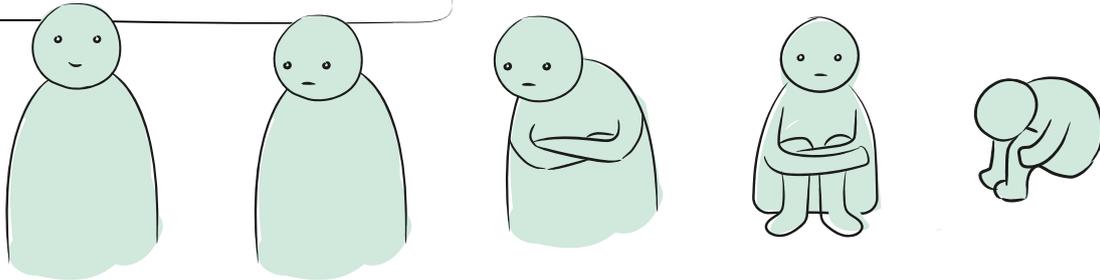
Continue to the next page to learn more about why we have expressive reactions to stress and anxiety



Modern ways of releasing this nervous energy can include nail biting, fidgeting, crying or shaking and trembling



A hunched or slouched posture means you're trying protect your body by 'hiding' your important organs and looking smaller

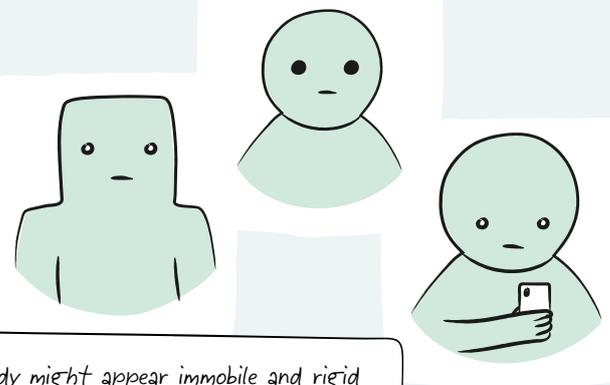


Crossing arms, legs, leaning against things or curling up could be your body looking for deep muscle pressure, which has a calming effect (like a hug or massage)

When a threat seems overwhelming, your body might try to conserve energy through the freeze response. This means your systems slow down



Your body might appear immobile and rigid and you might have a frozen stare. You might also look bored or spacey because you've become disconnected



# Expressive body

what can i do?

## Experience

## Tool

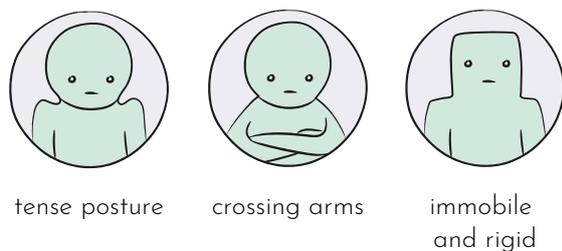


Lunch box p. 86

Journey planner p. 74

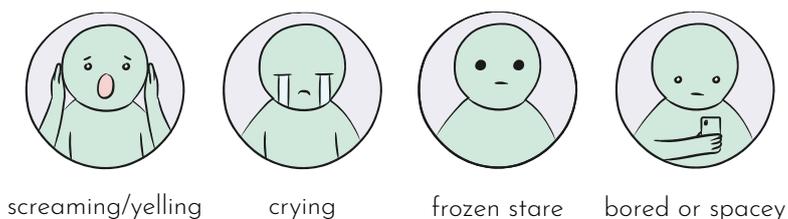
Support mapping p. 78

posture



Progressive muscle relaxation p. 51

facial expressions



Half-smile p. 72



## Acting body

Actions are what you actually do. This may or may not reflect how you're feeling, what you're thinking or what you feel like doing. Some actions feel good in the short term, but they don't work in the long run. For example, checking the news every hour may make you feel more prepared for a while, but can lead to information overload and feeling overwhelmed. Other actions may not feel nice in the moment, but we need to do them for the long term good. Going to bed at a reasonable hour or exercising may not be as nice as watching movies, but they will make you feel better next day.

See common actions  
related to anxiety

p. 39

Find out why these  
actions are occurring

p. 40

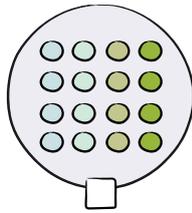
See tools that help  
with actions

p. 42

# Acting body experiences



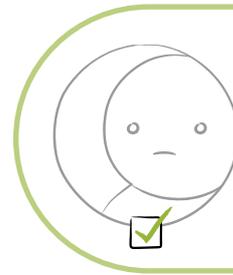
over-checking and researching



controlling things



over-planning



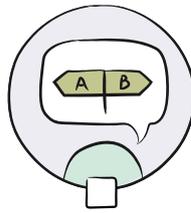
tick the boxes that apply to you



nit-picking and perfectionism



obsessing



indecision

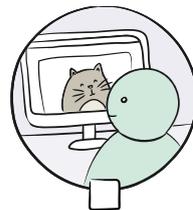


reassurance seeking

p. 40



withdrawing or hiding



putting things off/ procrastinating

follow the page numbers to discover why these experiences are happening

p. 41

to find relevant tools to help you deal with these reactions, head to p. 42

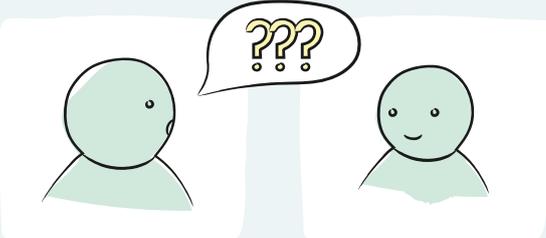
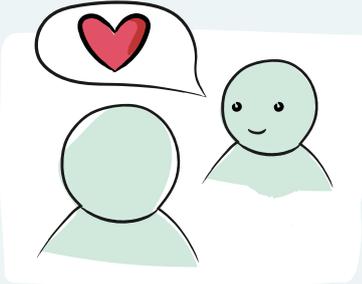
# Acting body explained

This part explains some of the common actions we do in response to stress and anxiety. In uncertain times, like the current COVID-19 situation, when information is lacking and changing, problem solving attempts may become problems themselves.



A modern version of the fight response is to tackle the threat through problem solving and reaching out to others for help

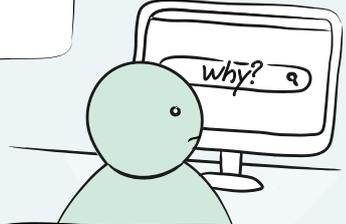
It's often useful to get help from others to respond to threat. More resources gave us higher chances of success. Getting help from others also implies a contract that we are going to be there for them when they are in need



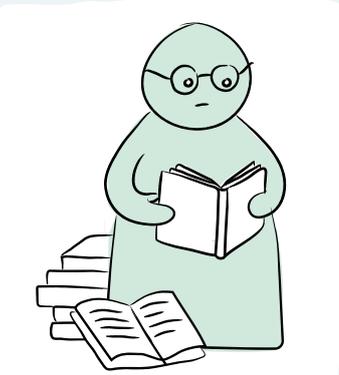
So, it's useful to reach out, and it's also important to know who can help and when

Reassurance seeking, like repeatedly asking people to tell us it's going to be okay, make our decisions or solve our problems, is a way of reaching out

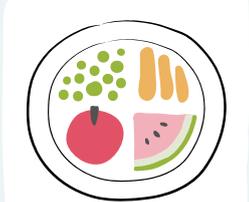
However, reassurance seeking can be tiring for others and make you feel less capable and independent in the long run



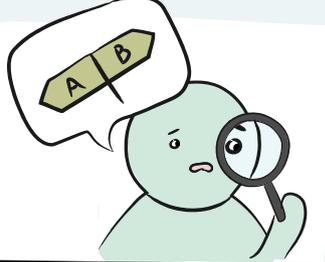
To make sure we get to the bottom of things, we may start obsessing with finding a reason for "why" something happens or find someone to blame through conspiracy theories, as though the reason will help us find a solution



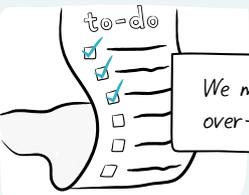
To look for certainty, we may start over checking and researching data



or look for things to control



Weighing up a problem from all angles can become indecision, nit-picking and perfectionism



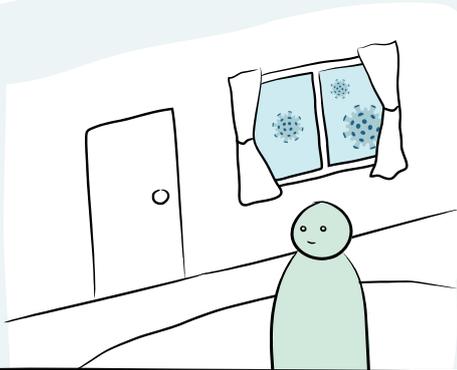
We may start over-planning

Ireland and Chu © 2020

[View all common actions](#)

[Discover what you can do about these reactions](#)

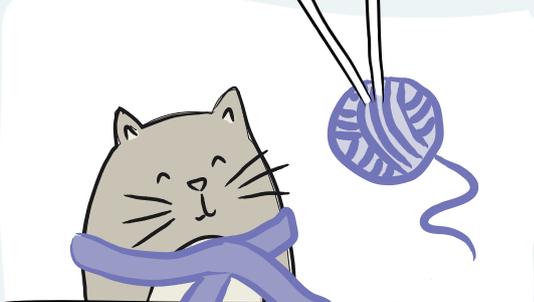
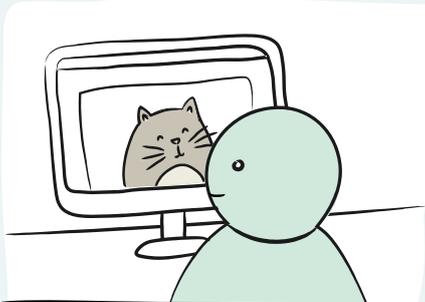
# Acting body explained



Sometimes it's difficult to tell how much avoidance is effective. Attempts to avoid a threat or conserve energy may go too far: we may withdraw or hide, like staying in bed all day

The useful version of flight during the COVID-19 pandemic is avoiding the virus, for example through social isolation, quarantine and hand washing

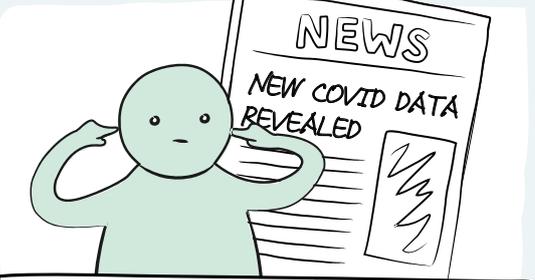
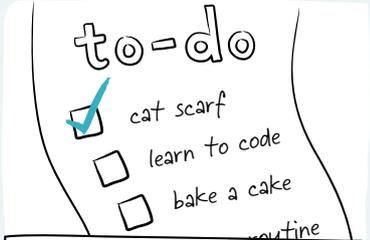
Being in quarantine can also help preserve energy



Sometimes we want to avoid a threat, but end up avoiding problem solving instead by procrastinating or being in denial

Procrastination (putting things off) helps avoiding the discomfort of dealing with something difficult by doing something that feels more manageable or pleasurable

This can be something we do on purpose, like watching a movie instead of getting our affairs in order



Or it can be more unconscious, like doing thing for others or focusing on non-urgent or non-important tasks

Denial works for a while because if we think the problem doesn't exist, we don't have to deal with it. But denial of a threat doesn't make the threat go away, so refusing to plan and act may leave you open to harm

Avoidance of dealing with things may feel good in the moment but creates problems in the long run when things keep piling up and we feel guilty and ineffective

# Acting body what can i do?

## Experience



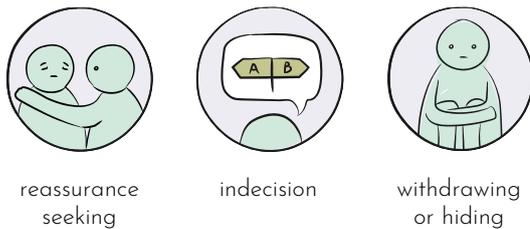
over-checking and researching

controlling things

over-planning

nit-picking and perfectionism

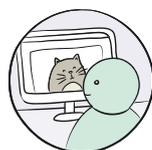
indecision



reassurance seeking

indecision

withdrawing or hiding



putting things off/  
procrastinating

## Tool

Journey planner p. 74

Mind care p. 92

Self-care p. 94

Urge surfing p. 71

Problem solving p. 60

Scheduled worry time p. 69

Accept or change p. 58

Unglue from worrying thoughts p. 67

Support mapping p. 78

Problem solving p. 60

To do list p. 75

Get it done p. 65

Unglue from worrying thoughts p. 67

Self-compassion p. 97

Cheerleading p. 96

First aid kit p. 49

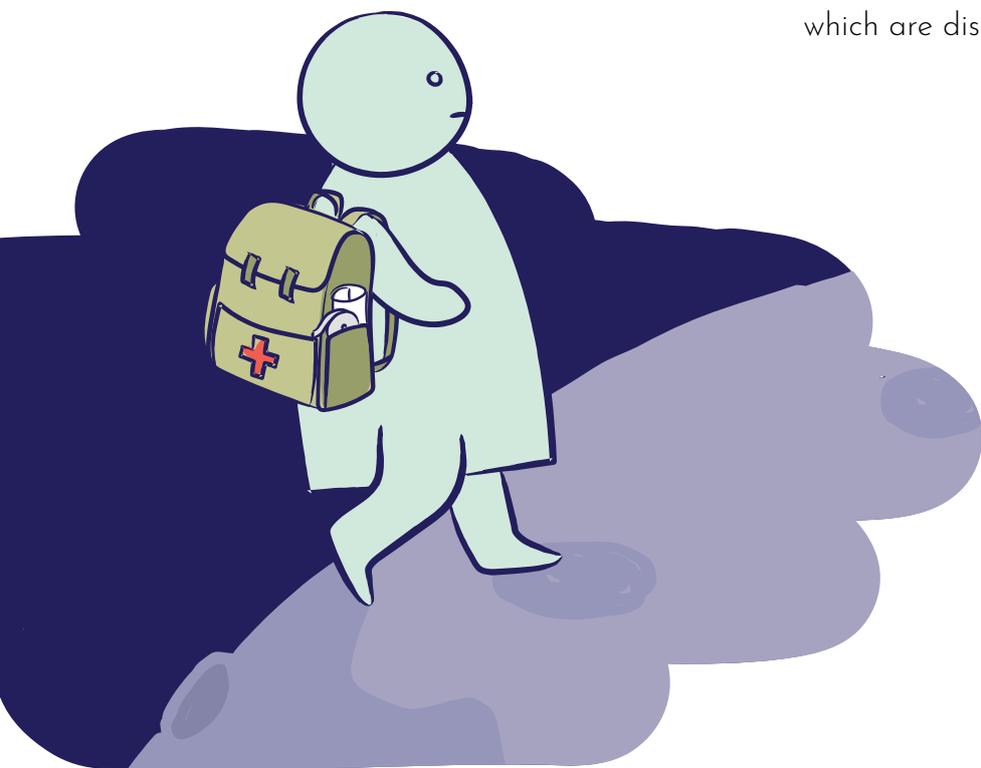
To do list p. 75

Get it done p. 65

Cheerleading p. 96

# Summary

In this section we talked about imagining that you have four bodies: physical being, inner experiences, expressions and actions. These bodies are connected, and they all have different experiences and functions. These bodies are trying their best to keep you safe. There are different tools that can be used for the different experiences, which are discussed in the next section.



 learn more about stress and anxiety *p. 4*

 have a look at tools to manage stress and anxiety *p. 44*



let us know what you think!

We'd like to know your opinion on this guide to help us develop better resources in the future! Follow the links for an anonymous online survey - it takes about 5 minutes to fill out.

[i'm an individual](#)

[i'm a health professional](#)

# 3

## Packing your bag of tools



The journey of managing stress and anxiety can be challenging. That's because real life is often complicated with many different things at play. In this section we will talk about different tools and how to use them for the best result. The aim is to put together your own backpack of tools for different stages of stress and anxiety. This part of the field guide has three parts:

### your tools

*p. 45*

types of tools  
how to get the most out of your tools  
tools index

### how to practice your tools

*p. 100*

how to practice  
practice sheet template

### how to pack your bag of tools

*p. 103*

what is your backpack?  
how to pack  
backpack templates



## Your tools

types of tools

*p. 46*

how to get the most out of your tools

*p. 47*

tools index

*p. 48*

## Types of tools

Many different tools can help you manage your stress and anxiety. In this section we talk about different tools and how to use them for the best result. The aim is to put together your own backpack of tools for every stage of stress and anxiety. There are four types of tools with different functions:



### First aid kit

Tools to use in an emergency so you can keep going

These tools work for **red**, **green** and **yellow** zones

pg. 49

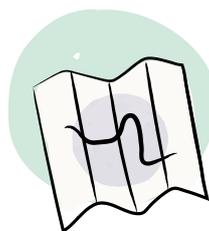


### Toolkit

Tools that can help when you're in need

These tools work for **green** and **yellow** zones

pg. 57



### Journey planner

Tools that help you plan and prepare for future events

These tools work for **green** and **yellow** zones

pg. 74



### Lunchbox

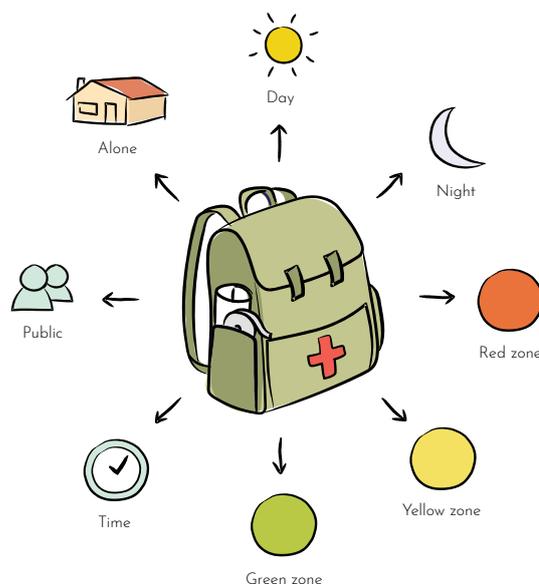
Tools to nourish your body and mind to keep you as strong as possible

These tools work for **green** and **yellow** zones

pg. 86

# How to get the most out of your tools

Everyone experiences stress and anxiety in their own way, and everyone has unique circumstances that shape these experiences. So give all the tools here a try. Some are more suitable for particular times, places and moments; others are more suitable for everyday use to keep your baseline healthy.



**severe** anxiety

red

**medium to high** anxiety

yellow

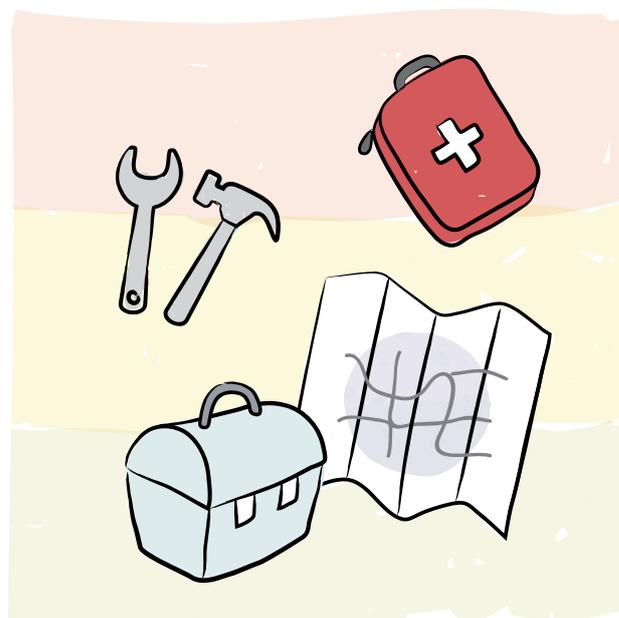
**no or low** anxiety

green

You may remember that stress and anxiety have different *phases and intensity* (p. 12): The green zone is pretty calm; yellow is moderate anxiety; red is high anxiety. There are different tools to use in different phases. Each tool tells you which intensity it suits best.

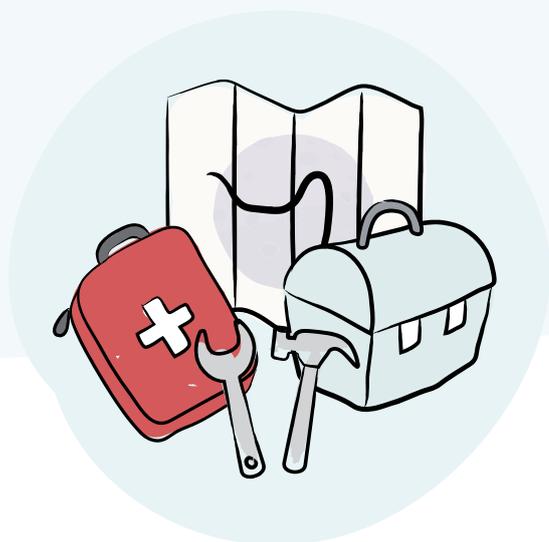
It's important to use tools in each phase of the anxiety, not just when you're feeling very stressed and anxious. Sometimes people get too hung up on using first aid tools that manage high anxiety, but we need to look at the anxiety experience as a whole.

When you're in the red zone, first aid tools are useful to bring the intensity down. But we don't want to stop there. Just like a physical first aid kit, the first aid tools are the first steps towards to managing anxiety. Once you're back in the yellow or green zone, use the other toolkits (lunchbox, journey planner etc.) to problem solve and manage your general wellbeing.



# Tools index

There are many different tools for managing stress and anxiety. Here are some of our favourites for you to try:



## first aid kit

49

paced breathing	50
progressive muscle relaxation (PMR)	51
intense exercise	53
cold water	54
grounding	55

## toolkit

57

accept or change	58
problem solving	60
pros and cons	62
get it done	65
unglue from worry thoughts	67
schedule worry time	69
urge surfing	71
half-smiling	72

## journey planner

74

to-do list	75
support mapping	78
professional support	82
COVID crisis plan	83

## lunchbox

86

body care	87
mind care	92
self-care	94
cheerleading	96
self-compassion	97



## First aid kit

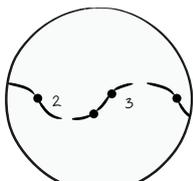
The First aid kit has a set of tools that tend to work fast and well to decrease severe experiences. There are two ways of using First aid tools:

**1. Use them when you're in the red zone** with severe stress and anxiety, so you can return to the yellow or green zone. Once you're in yellow or green, you can use a wider range of tools. The First aid tools tend to work well for:

- Overwhelming emotions and thoughts
- Strong urges to do something impulsive
- Reassurance seeking, Withdrawing or hiding

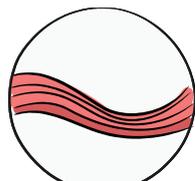
**2. You can use the First aid tools even when your stress and anxiety are in green and yellow** and you'd like to have a quick break or recharge.

It's important to use the First aid tools wisely. Sometimes it's tempting to only manage stress and anxiety when it becomes so severe that it's too uncomfortable not to do anything about it. However, First aid tools only work on your experiences, they don't solve problem situations. So if often have severe stress and anxiety, make sure to use First Aid tools to get back to the green and yellow zone, then use your thinking brain and the other toolkits to make changes to your life. You're not alone, have a look at the *Journey Planner (p. 74) kit* to map out who can support you, including professional help if needed.



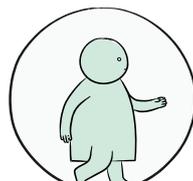
pg. 50

paced  
breathing



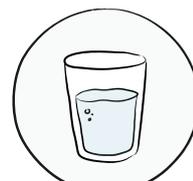
pg. 51

progressive muscle  
relaxation (PMR)



pg. 53

intense  
movement



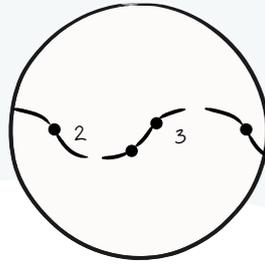
pg. 54

cold water



pg. 55

grounding



## Paced breathing

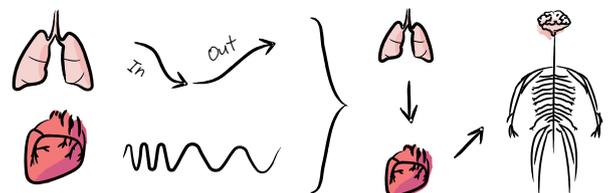
A breath is a cycle of inhaling and exhaling air: the in breath and the out breath. You might pause between the air reaching your lungs and taking the next breath. People generally take 10-14 breaths per minute when they're calm. Usually, the more anxious you feel, the faster you breathe. Paced breathing is slowing down the pace of your breathing to 5-7 breaths per minute.

Type of tool	Anxiety level	Time it takes to work	Where to use it	Resources needed
 first aid kit		seconds to minutes	 alone  public	none; or clock for fancy practise

**Works well for:** overwhelmed, unable to cope; needing a break to recharge; muscle tension; rapid heart rate; chest pain, tightness or discomfort

### How does it work and what are the benefits?

Your heart beats faster when you breathe in and slower when you breathe out. By slowing down the out breath, you can slow down the heart rate. Slowing down the heart rate can reverse the *fight-or-flight response* (see p. 9).



### How can I practice?

Get a clock that shows seconds and count how many seconds your in breaths and out breaths take. After a few breaths, try to add a second or so to every in breath and out breath, and make the out breath longer than the in breath. If you want, you can count the pause at the top of each inhale and the bottom of each exhale.

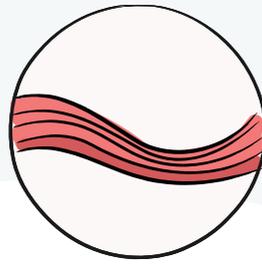
Don't force the breath further than is comfortable. Notice how many seconds a comfortable breath lasts. Then remember that number (e.g., in four seconds, out six seconds) so you can count each breath in your head when you don't have a clock. Counting can also keep your mind focused.

### Tips and troubleshooting

If your breathing gets too slow, you might feel lightheaded. Quick and shallow breathing might also make your diaphragm stiff and weak, which can make your chest feel constricted and tight. To overcome these side effects, start by slowing down just a small number of breaths (for example, five breaths in a row). Practise this twice a day and gradually increase the number of slow breaths once they feel comfortable.

You may also find that focusing on your breathing makes you feel anxious. If that happens, try to focus on counting instead. You can always try another tool and come back to this one at a different time.





## Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR)

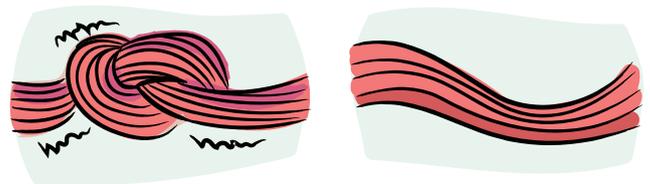
*Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR) is tensing and relaxing muscle groups to calm your body and mind. You can use PMR as a full-body relaxation technique, which may take about five minutes. Or you can use it to relax certain muscle groups that are prone to get tense if you feel stressed, like your shoulders, back or tummy. PMR is a gold-standard exercise for stress and anxiety, and you can practise it 2-4 times a day during stressful times.*

Type of tool	Anxiety level	Time it takes to work	Where to use it	Resources needed
 first aid kit		seconds to minutes	 alone  public	none

*Works well for:* overwhelmed, unable to cope; needing a break to recharge; muscle tension; chest pain, tightness or discomfort; relaxing your posture

### How does it work and what are the benefits?

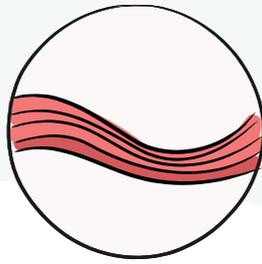
Your muscles tense during the fight-flight-freeze response. By relaxing your muscles, you're telling your brain that it's okay to relax. Tensing and relaxing your muscles actually releases more tension than just relaxing muscles. Why? Because by tensing and relaxing, you're increasing awareness of those two sensations, which means you're more able to notice and control how relaxed you are.



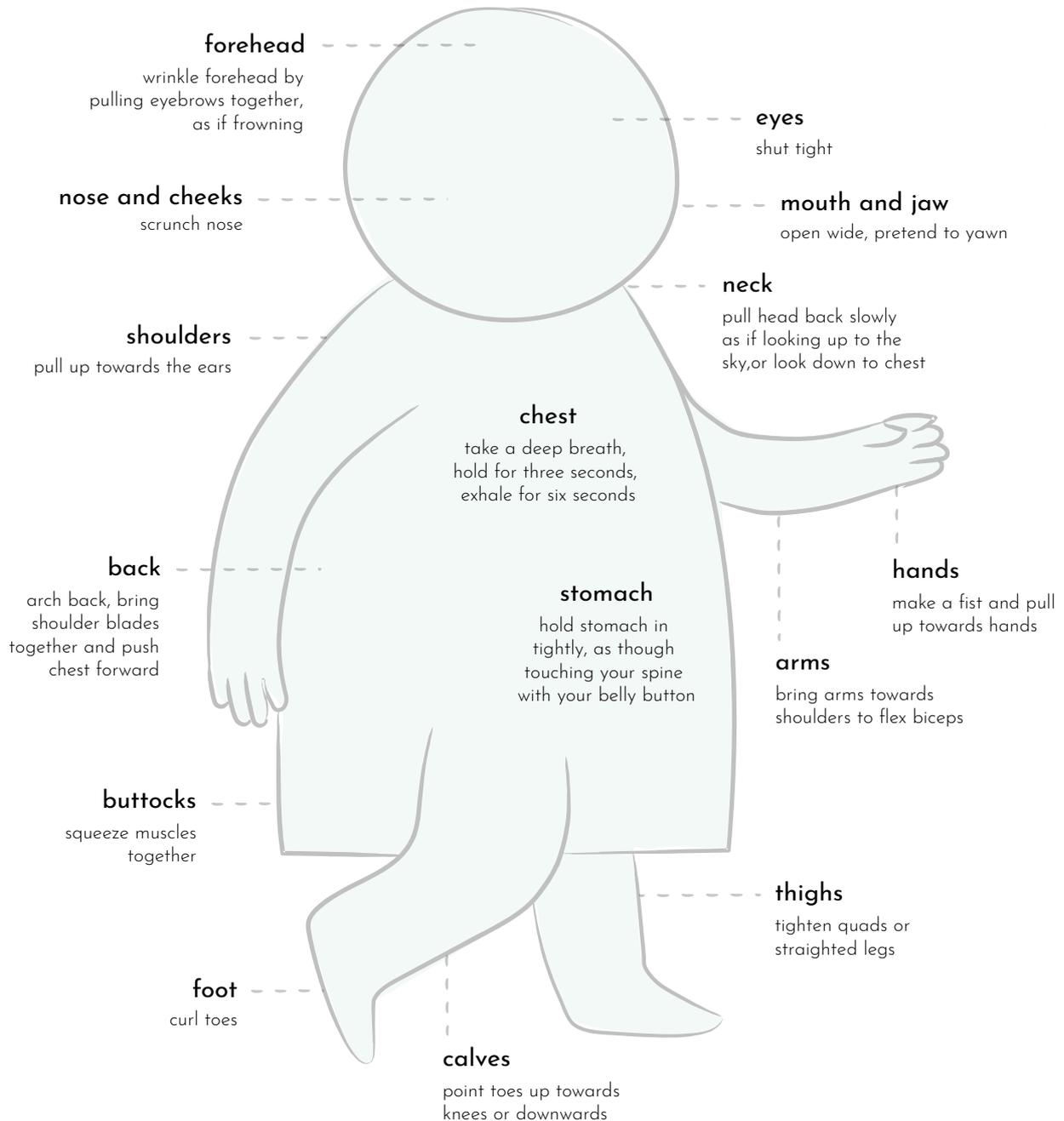
### How can I practice PMR?

You can try PMR while you're sitting, standing or lying down.

1. Tense each muscle group (see the list on the following page) to about 80% tension (not so much that you clench up) for 5-10 seconds per muscle group.
2. Notice the tension you feel.
3. Let go of that tension by quickly releasing the muscles. This isn't a slow release, like a morning stretch, but a quick release, like catching a ball and passing it on.
4. Notice the feeling of relaxation.



## Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR)

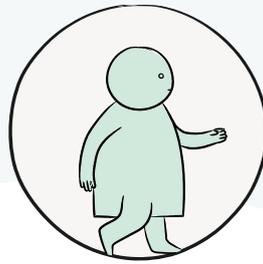


Ireland and Chu © 2020

### Warning, potential side effects and tips

If you have physical injuries or conditions involving muscle pain or muscle cramps, talk to your doctor to make sure you can practise PMR safely. Take extra care if you're tensing sensitive areas, or skip these until your doctor gives you the okay.

If you feel stiff, start tensing your muscles slowly and gently (to 30-50% rather than 80%) to avoid cramps. Then, if your body feels okay, gradually increase the tension the next few times you practise.



## Intense movement

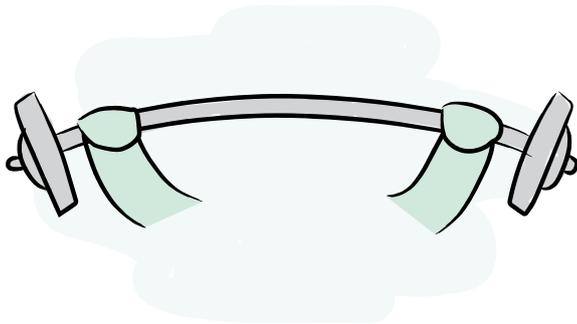
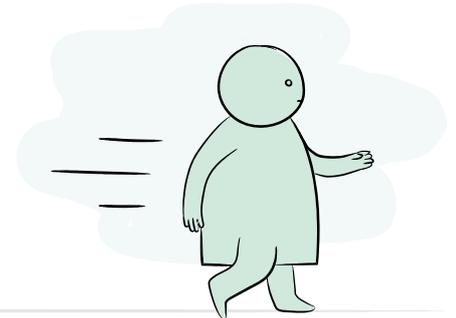
*Intense movement means a short burst of intense aerobic movement to release pent-up physical energy.*

Type of tool	Anxiety level	Time it takes to work	Where to use it	Resources needed
 first aid kit	 red	seconds to minutes	 alone	none

*Works well for:* overwhelmed, unable to cope; needing a break to recharge

### How does it work and what are the benefits?

When your body gets into fight-or-flight mode, it revs up a lot of energy. Think of this as like pumping gas to an accelerator pedal, but not actually driving forward. This energy can get stuck unless you physically release it. Intense movement can be an effective way to do this and to get your body out of fight-or-flight mode. Exercise can also improve your physical and mental wellbeing.

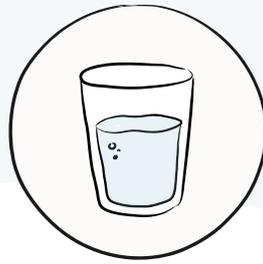


### How can I practice?

Do something intensely physical. In non-pandemic times (or where restrictions are lifted), this may be running, fast walking or hitting the gym for a workout. If you're isolating at home, you can still exercise intensely: jumping jacks, burpees, sit ups, lounges, squats etc. You can try a bunch of different exercises (especially if you're at home), or do the same exercise, like running or walking - whatever suits. Try exercising for 20-30 minutes to get the full positive impact.

### Potential side effects, tips and troubleshooting

If you have physical injuries or health conditions, talk to your doctor before you start exercising to make sure it's safe and to find the best form of exercise for your body. If you're underweight or tend to use exercise to control your body, thoughts and emotions, talk to a health professional to find out how you can exercise in a healthy way that benefits your body and mind.



## Cold water

Type of tool	Anxiety level	Time it takes to work	Where to use it	Resources needed
 first aid kit	 yellow red	seconds to minutes	 alone	Cold water (e.g., tap, shower, cold pack)

*Works well for:* overwhelmed, unable to cope; needing a break to recharge

### 1 Hold your wrist under cold water and count to 100

#### How does it work?

The blood vessels in your wrists are close to the surface of your skin and are major points for blood flow. Cold water can contract these blood vessels and slow your circulation. Counting can focus your mind and help your thinking brain come back online.

### 2 Take a cold shower for 2-5 minutes

#### How does it work?

Cold water stimulates hormones that can help you calm down (norepinephrine) or feel happier (endorphin). A cold shower can make your skin's nerve receptors send electric impulses to your brain to boost your mental energy. If you're revved up, a cold shower can calm you down by lowering your temperature.

#### How can I practise?

When the weather is hot or your body temperature is high, a cold shower can feel good. Otherwise, start by getting into a comfortable, lukewarm shower and slowly turning down the water temperature. Use deep breathing to help you deal with the discomfort. Focus on the sensation of cold if you'd like to get out of your head or if you don't like focusing on your breathing. Start with a short two-minute shower and gradually increase the time to five minutes. Most people start enjoying this technique after a few tries, so stick with it if you can.

### 3 Use cold water on your face while holding your breath

#### How does it work?

Putting cold water on your face while holding your breath can slow down your heart rate and circulation. This is because of what's called the dive reflex, which is designed to 'gear down' your nervous system if you're in cold water without oxygen.

#### How can I practise?

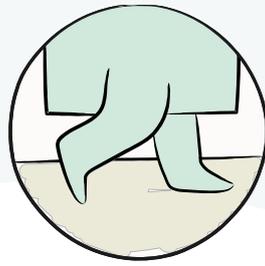
**Bowl or sink:** Fill up a big bowl or sink with cold tap water. Take a deep breath and hold it. Bend over and put your face in the water, up to your temples, for 30-60 seconds, or for longer if you can; the longer the better.

**Cold pack:** If you have a cold pack or ice pack, make sure it's wrapped in a wet cloth so it's not too cold on your skin. Take a deep breath and hold it. Bend over and put the cold pack on your face, making sure it touches as much of your eyes, cheeks and temples as possible. Hold your breath for 30-60 seconds, or longer if you can; the longer the better.

**NOTE:** You can make a DIY cold pack by half-filling a medium zip-lock bag with cold water or ice cubes and cold water. You can also dunk a piece of cloth (like a small face towel or clean tea towel) in cold water.

### Warning and potential side effects

Using cold water can quickly decrease your heart rate or body temperature. If you have a heart condition, low heart rate or eating disorder, talk to your doctor to make sure that using cold water is safe for you.

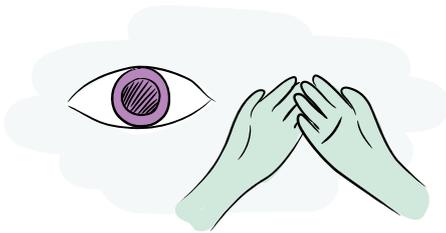


## Grounding

Grounding is a mindfulness technique that uses sight, sound and touch to get you out of your head and into the present moment.

Type of tool	Anxiety level	Time it takes to work	Where to use it	Resources needed
 first aid kit		minutes	 public  alone	none

*Works well for:* overwhelmed, unable to cope; needing a break to recharge; blank mind; unreal; numb or paralysed; distorted sense of time; disconnected from yourself



### How does it work and what are the benefits?

When you're caught up in your experiences and your body goes into fight-flight-freeze, it can be difficult to calm down your emotional brain. But by using your senses, you can turn your attention to the present moment and notice the here and now. This gives your emotional brain a break and turns down that fight-flight-freeze response by gently bringing awareness into the body.

### How can I practice?

Turn your attention to your environment. Say to yourself:

Five things I  
can see are...

and name five  
things around  
(door, table,  
window etc.)

Five things I  
can hear are...

and name five  
things you can  
(ticking clock,  
traffic, etc.)

Five things I  
can feel are...

and touch  
five things  
(your clothes,  
your chair, etc.)

...then go down to four things you  
can see, hear and feel

...then go down to three of each

...then two of each

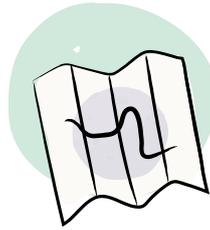
...then one of each

Make sure you don't rush. This isn't about speed, but about turning your awareness to what's around you. Try to notice small details, like you're an alien who's just arrived on Earth and is seeing everything for the first time.

### Tips and potential side effects

No known side effects. Because grounding focuses outwards (things outside you) rather than inwards, it works well for people who feel uncomfortable when they focus on internal experiences (like breathing, sensations or thoughts).

This section covered all of the First aid kit tools that you might use when you're in the red, yellow or green zones. Try another set of tools or choose your own adventure:



### Keep browsing toolkits and tools

[see all tools and toolkits](#)

*p. 48*

### Learn more about how to use tools

[learn how to get the most out of your tools](#)

*p. 47*

[learn how to practice your tools](#)

*p. 100*

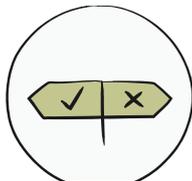
[how to put together a backpack of tools](#)

*p. 103*



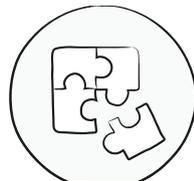
## Toolkit

The Toolkit tools can be used to manage stress and anxiety in the yellow and green zone. They can help you manage thoughts, urges and get things done.



pg. 58

accept or change



pg. 60

problem solving



pg. 62

pros and cons



pg. 65

get it done



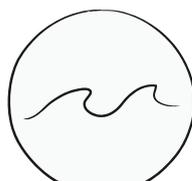
pg. 67

unglue from worrying thoughts



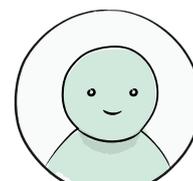
pg. 69

scheduled worry time



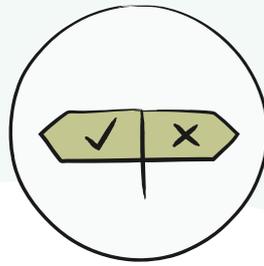
pg. 71

urge-surfing



pg. 72

half-smiling



## Accept or change

Many of us wish we had the wisdom to know what we can change and what we just need to accept. The accept or change flowchart can help you make a decision about changing or accepting a situation, or about the experiences you have during this process.

Type of tool	Anxiety level	Time it takes to work	Where to use it	Resources needed
 toolkit	 green yellow	0 - 2 minutes	  alone public	none, or flowchart on p. 74 to practise

*Works well for:*

indecision; over-checking and researching; controlling things; over-planning; nitpicking and perfectionism

*How does it work and what are the benefits?*

Working through a flowchart can help you decide the most effective action to take, especially when your thinking brain is crowding out your emotional brain. With practise, using this tool will become second nature and you won't even need to look at the steps.

*How can I practise?*

### 1 Define the problem

Make it specific - ask 'Why is that a problem? What's the threat?' For example, if your problem is 'I'm worried about getting COVID-19', be more detailed. Why is that a problem? What's the threat? Maybe it's 'If I get sick and can't work for four weeks, I can't pay my bills'. This is a specific definition of the problem.

### 3 Work to change on what you can control or influence

If you can't change the problem, change how you relate to it by using tools to lower your levels of stress and anxiety.

### 2 Assess how much control you have over the problem

Be realistic about this - think about your time, energy and other resources. You can feel concerned about lots of things, but only have resources to influence or control a few of them. Break down your control like this:

#### a. Concern:

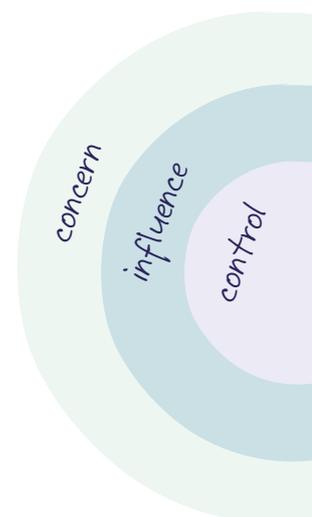
I don't have savings to pay my bills if I can't work for four weeks.

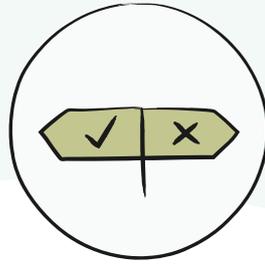
#### b. Influence:

I can ask for financial help (there's no guarantee people will give you that help)

#### c. Control:

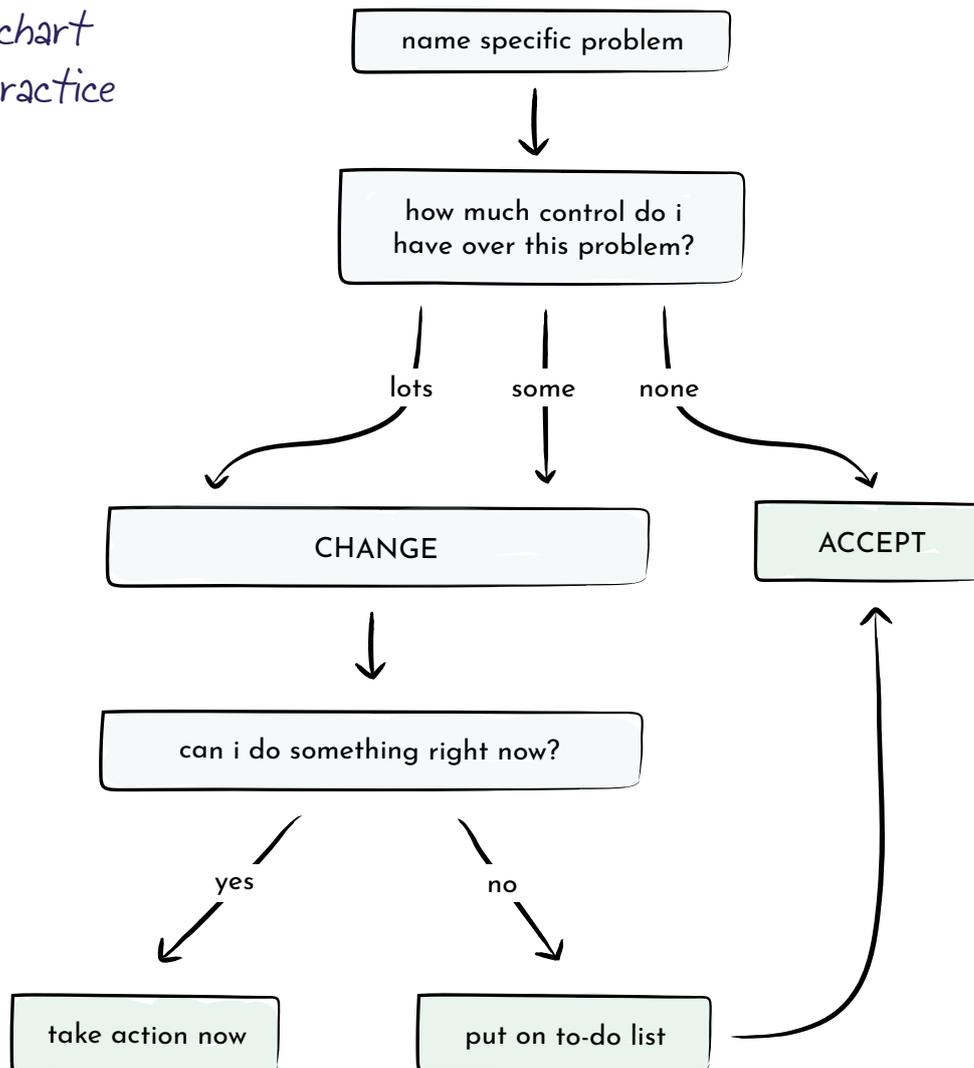
I can make a list of people and organisations that might help me financially. I can then contact the people and organisations on that list.





## Accept or change

Flowchart  
to practice



### Tips and troubleshooting

Acceptance and change can be a journey. The following tools can help you:

#### Change:

problem-solving *pg. 60*

to-do list *pg. 75*

get it done *pg. 65*

pros and cons *pg. 62*

#### Accept:

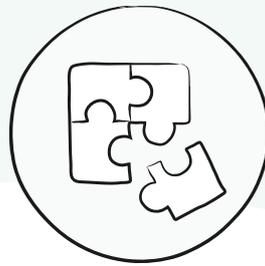
unglue from worrying thoughts *pg. 67*

urge-surfing *pg. 71*

half-smile *pg. 72*

self-compassion *pg. 97*

first-aid tools *pg. 49*



## Problem solving

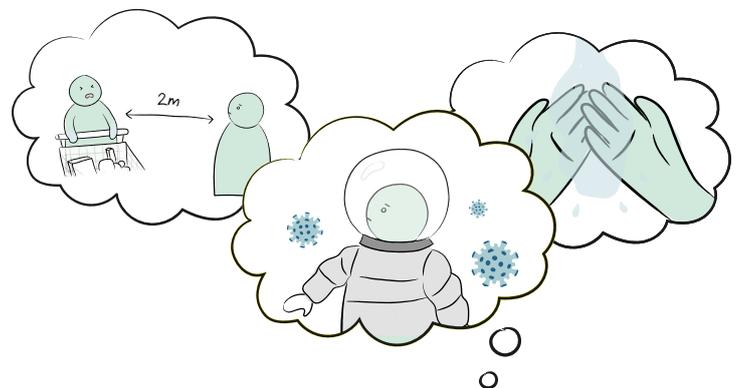
Stress and anxiety can function to highlight problems or potential problems that need to be solved. Problem-solving is managing your worries by working on changing the situation for the better.

Type of tool	Anxiety level	Time it takes to work	Where to use it	Resources needed
 toolkit		minutes to hours (depending on problem)	 alone      public	something to write on/with (paper or digital)

*Works well for:* uncomfortable thoughts and feelings; over-checking and researching; controlling things; over-planning; nitpicking and perfectionism; reassurance-seeking; withdrawing or hiding

### How does it work and what are the benefits?

Problem-solving is thinking about problems in a strategic way so you can come up with solutions and act on them. When you get stressed or anxious, you might focus on how stressful a situation is rather than what you can do about it. Focusing on strategy and solutions instead can make you feel more effective, organised and confident.

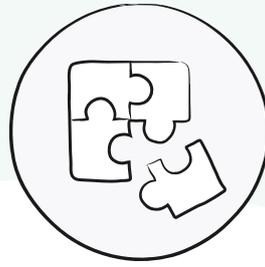


### Tips and troubleshooting

You won't always have the resources you need to solve a pressing problem. Here's what you can do if that happens:

- If the problem is complicated, talk to others to brainstorm solutions. Use the *Problem-solving steps* (p. 61) to stay focused. Check your *Support people* (p. 78) to see who can help.
- Use the *Accept or change tool* (p. 58) to see if you need to change the problem or accept it.

Problem-solving usually works well when you use it alongside the *To-do list* (p. 75) and *Get it done tools* (p. 65).



## Problem solving

*How can I practice?*

### 1 Define the problem

Make it specific - ask 'Why is that a problem? What's the threat?' For example, if your problem is 'I'm worried about getting COVID-19', be more detailed. Why is that a problem? What's the threat? Maybe it's 'If I get sick, I might make others sick'. This is a specific definition of the problem.

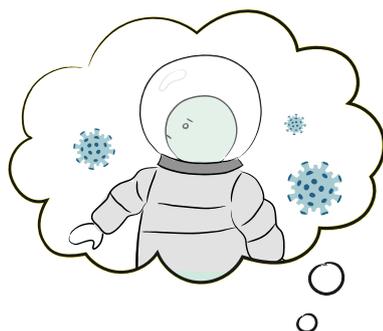
### 2 List the obstacles

What makes it difficult to solve this problem? For example, 'I live with other people, so I might need to use things they use too (e.g., the bathroom) and it's hard to keep my distance'.

### 3 Identify your goal

What needs to happen to minimise (or solve) the problem? For example:

*I need to lower my risk of spreading the virus to the people I live with'*



### 4 Brainstorm solutions

Come up with many ideas as you can that could solve the problem. Don't judge them - just write them down. For example:

- quarantine myself in one room and stay there unless I need the bathroom
- clean everything I touch that others might need to use with soap and water or disinfectant
- get a hazmat suit for myself and everyone who might come near me

### 5 Evaluate the ideas

Ask yourself: Which of these ideas will work? Which won't? For example, you can probably get everyone you live with disposable gloves and face masks, but hazmat suits might be a little trickier.

### 6 Prioritise your solutions

Prioritise your solutions. Pick the best one you've come up with - the ones that are the most likely to work, the most practical and the most doable. Think of the pros and cons of each solution (see the Pros and cons tool on p.x. if you'd like more info about this process).

### 7 Act on your solution

Act on your solution. Do this as far as it's possible to do. For example, start stocking up on the cleaning and protective supplies you need.



## Pros and cons

'Pros' are positives, 'cons' are negative. Weighing up pros and cons means exploring the benefits and costs of something to choose the best course of action.

Type of tool	Anxiety level	Time it takes to work	Where to use it	Resources needed
 toolkit	 green yellow	seconds to minutes	  alone public	none or template on p. 79.

*Works well for:* indecision; strong urges to do something impulsive

*How does it work and what are the benefits?*

Making decisions can be hard. Some decisions are complicated, so it's difficult to know what to do. Some decisions and behaviours (e.g., procrastination or using quick fixes like alcohol to manage stress and anxiety) work well in the short term, so we keep doing them, even though they actually make things worse in the long run. And sometimes, if you feel tired, hungry, sad, etc., it's hard to use your thinking brain because your emotional brain takes over. But looking at pros and cons can help you sort out your thoughts and make the best decision based on balancing logic with emotion.

*How can I practise?*



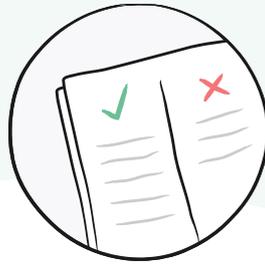
**1** Chose a decision you'd like to make. For example:  
Should I tell my friends I've been having a tough time?

**2** Think about the benefits and costs of the decision (use the [template on p. 79](#)). Here are some questions you might want to ask yourself about the decision you're weighing up:

- What are the main benefits and drawbacks or challenges?
- How does it help me achieve my goals?
- Does it bring me closer to how I want to live my life and be the person I'd like to be?
- How does it impact the people who are important to me?
- What are the risks involved?
- What are the short-term consequences?
- What are the long-term consequences?

**3** Weigh up the pros and cons to consider which decision makes more sense.

**4** Review your pros and cons after you've made your decision and acted on it. What were the short-term and long-term consequences? If you struggle with making certain kinds of decisions, keep a copy of the pros and cons lists you've made for these decisions so you can refer back to them in future.



## Pros and cons

Below are two example sets of pros and cons. The first is about reaching out to friends when you're going through a tough time and aren't sure if you should ask for help. The second is about whether you should keep seeking reassurance from friends if you tend to ask them for a lot of support with decision-making (e.g., repeatedly asking their opinion, and often about the same things). You might find that both situations apply to you: while it can be hard to reach out to friends about certain subjects, you might find it much easier to seek their reassurance about other things in your life.

example 1

pros of talking to my friends	cons of talking to my friends
<p>It's nice to feel connected</p> <p>They might have some useful tips for me</p> <p>I often feel better when I talk to them</p> <p>Feeling heard and understood can help, even if it doesn't solve my problems</p> <p>I value friendships and supporting each other</p> <p>Maybe they've been having a tough time too so we can be there for each other</p> <p>They'd want me to reach out</p>	<p>I don't want to be burden</p> <p>I don't want them to think I'm weak</p> <p>I don't want them to feel sorry for me</p> <p>There's nothing they can really do to help me</p> <p>I should be able to deal with this by myself</p>

based on these pros and cons, it would make sense to reach out to friends.

example 2

pros of reassurance-seeking	cons of reassurance-seeking
<p>I feel relieved for a while</p> <p>I feel more certain and supported</p> <p>I feel cared for</p>	<p>Feeling reassured doesn't last long and I need more reassurance</p> <p>It can be tiring for others</p> <p>I worry that others get fed up with me</p> <p>I might feel inept when it comes to making decisions if I don't practise making them my own</p> <p>Others may see me as not very capable, so might find it difficult to ask help from me when they need it</p> <p>I'll end up having to make the decision anyway</p>

Based on these pros and cons, it would make sense to try limiting your reassurance-seeking

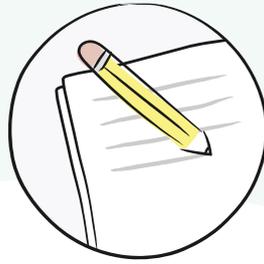
### Tips and troubleshooting

Sometimes it's easy to make the right decision - if you have lots of pros and hardly any cons, that's a no-brainer. But if you end up with lots of pros and lots of cons, try to work out which of those pros and cons are most important to your overall wellbeing.

# Pros and cons template

pros of...

cons of...



## Get it done

You've probably got lots of reasons for not getting something done. Most of them fall into three categories: you can't; you don't know how to; or you don't want to. *Get it done* is a practical tool you can use to do stop putting off those things you think you can't do, think you don't know how to do or just don't want to do.

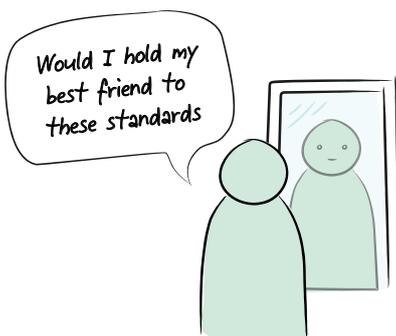
Type of tool	Anxiety level	Time it takes to work	Where to use it	Resources needed
 toolkit	 green yellow	Seconds to minutes	  alone      public	none or some planning

*Works well for:* putting things off (procrastinating); reassurance-seeking; withdrawing or hiding

*How does it work and what are the benefits?*

Using this tool can help you stop procrastinating. When you get things done, it feels good, right? You feel accomplished and efficient, and you have less reason to feel stressed and anxious.

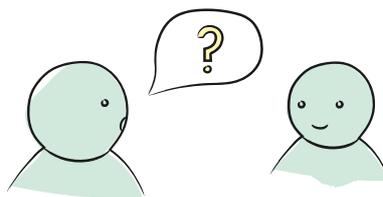
### Tips and troubleshooting



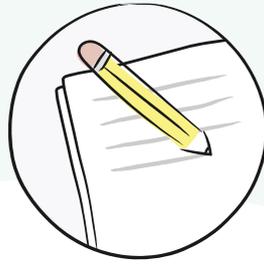
If you struggle with your own expectations, ask yourself: would I hold my best friend to these same standards? If not, lower your expectations and practise *self-compassion* (p. 97)

During the pandemic, you're likely to come up against some extra challenges that'll make it harder for you to get things done. Rather than beating yourself up about not getting things done, try to understand why you don't want to get them done. If you have too many things to do and not enough energy, time, money and support to do them, no wonder you don't feel like – you've got a huge gap between your expectations and your resources. These expectations might not be yours – they might be from your family, employer, society, etc. – but that doesn't mean you won't feel pressured by them.

If you struggle with work or family expectations, try to ask for help and renegotiate what's realistic for you to achieve at this point.



If you struggle with society's expectations, think about how society works. Who really benefits from focusing on productivity instead of health and wellbeing? Who gets hurt by it? The pandemic could be a useful time for you to rethink your values and standards you hold yourself to, so you can influence your community and government when you can.



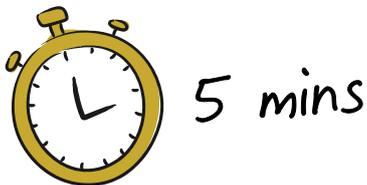
## Get it done

How can I practise?

The first step to getting things done is to figure out what you need to get done. Sometimes this is easy, like putting on a load of washing. But sometimes it's more complicated, like wanting to get your finances back on track. If you have a specific task to get done, read on. If you don't, start with the *To-do list tool* (p. 63).

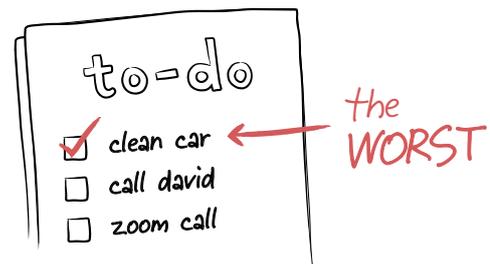
### Just five minutes

Planning to do a task for just five minutes makes it look a lot easier to do. Why? Because if it's only for five minutes, it won't be that bad and it'll be over before you know it. Once you've done a few five-minute sessions, try adding another five, 10 or even 15 minutes.



### Worst first

If you have lots of things to do, knock off the worst task first to get it out of the way. This means it won't hang over you all day (or week, or month...), so you can feel accomplished and relaxed.



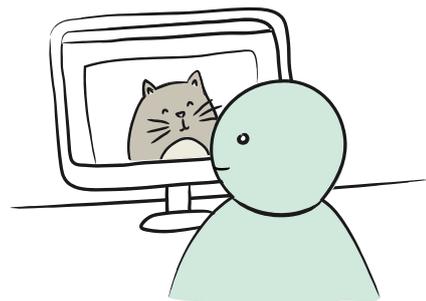
### Use momentum

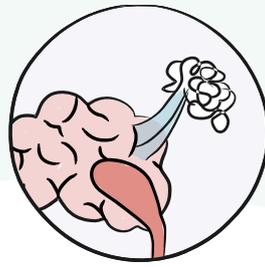
Start doing something that's energising or makes you feel competent. Use that feeling to get started on a task you don't really like - you might be surprised at the difference it makes.



### Reward yourself

Plan to do something fun after you've done the thing you don't feel like doing. This can motivate you and let you focus on how good you're going to feel when it's over, rather than on how bad you think you're going to feel when you're doing it. Rewards don't have to be big or costly - they can be as simple as taking a break with a nice cuppa.





## Unglue from worry thoughts

*Ungluing is a mindfulness technique that lets you be aware of your thoughts without getting caught up in them.*

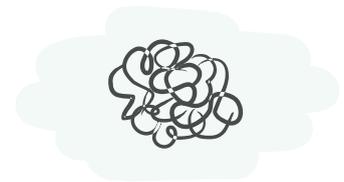
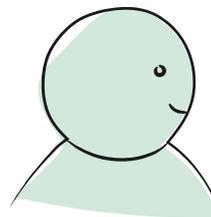
Type of tool	Anxiety level	Time it takes to work	Where to use it	Resources needed
 toolkit	 green yellow	0-10 minutes	 alone  public	none

*Works well for:* uncomfortable thoughts and feelings; over-checking and researching; controlling things; over-planning; nitpicking and perfectionism; reassurance-seeking; withdrawing or hiding

### How does it work and what are the benefits?

Your brain is a lean, mean survival machine - it's designed to scan for danger so it can keep you safe. That's a big job, so it's pretty normal for your thoughts to be about 80% negative. You can easily find caught up in them, with your worries playing on a loop in your head and no way to escape them - like you're glued to them. It's easy to forget that thoughts aren't reality. Ungluing is the process of creating distance from your thoughts: looking at them instead of looking at the world from them.

Your thoughts are kind of like a game of chess. You want the 'positive' white pieces to beat the 'negative' black pieces, and you can find yourself fixating on this internal battle.



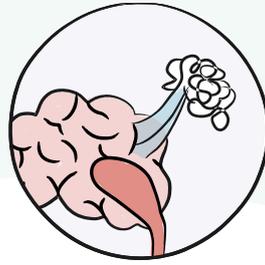
Ungluing means not getting caught up in your mental chess game. Instead, imagine yourself as the chess board, not the chess pieces. By focusing on the process of thinking instead of on the thoughts themselves, you can let your thoughts play out and let go of the need to control or fight them.

### How can I practise?

Lots of tools can help you unglue from your thoughts and experiences, and we've listed our favourites on the following page. Give them all a try - they'll get easier and more effective with practise.

### Tips and troubleshooting

It's important to try to unglue from thoughts that are unhelpful or that make you fixate on a situation you can't change. Use the *Accept or change tool (p. 58)* if you need help deciding whether you need to act on a thought or unglue from it.



## Unglue from worry thoughts

Quick tools (take seconds)

### thanks, mind!

This tool is based on acknowledging that your mind is designed to look for danger and keep you safe. It's simple: when you notice a worry thought that you can't act on, just say to yourself: Thanks, mind! This is like a 'Thanks but no thanks' - it recognises that your mind has the best intentions, just like a good friend or family member who worries about you too much.

### name the story

You've probably gone over the same thoughts, worries and 'what-ifs' so many times that they've become like fairytales - you know them like the back of your hand, and sometimes they're a bit scary and weird. Instead of rehashing the same old story, cut it short by giving it a title: the 'I can't do this' story; the 'Why me?' story; the 'This isn't fair' story. Having a title can help remind you that going through the whole story is not actually worth your mental energy, because it won't give you solutions, just likely end up making you feel more stressed and anxious.

Longer tools (take minutes)

### leaves on a stream

To use this tool, get in a comfortable position. Close your eyes, look downwards or fix your vision on a particular spot. Then try the following:

- Imagine sitting beside a riverbank watching leaves gently floating on top of the water.
- Take each thought that enters your mind and put it on a leaf, then let the water carry it past you.
- Keep putting your thoughts on the leaves, whether they're happy, sad or worry thoughts. The point here is simply to notice your thoughts, not dwell on what they mean or what they're telling you.

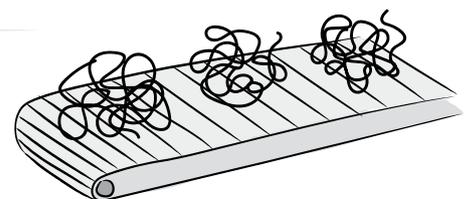
### d. Troubleshooting:

- If you keep having the same thought, just keep putting it on leaves and watching them float past again and again. If a leaf gets stuck, watch it hang around for a while, then float it away.
- If your mind goes blank, keep looking at the leaves. This will help your thoughts start up again.
- If your thoughts start racing, try grouping them - for example, 'COVID-19 thoughts', 'worry thoughts', 'things to do', etc. Put whole groups on the leaves and let them float by.
- You're likely to get distracted at some point, which is natural. When you notice that you've drifted off, bring your attention back to the leaves. If you find yourself feeling bored or thinking that this exercise is silly or that you're not doing it right, put those thoughts on the leaves and float them past.
- Allow your thoughts to find their natural rhythm.

### conveyor belt

To use this tool, get in a comfortable position. Close your eyes, look downwards or fix your vision on a particular spot. Then try the following:

- This is a different version of the leaves on the stream exercise - it's a good alternative if you find it difficult to visualise detailed images, like sitting by a riverbank. It also works well if you're such a visual person that the leaves on the stream exercise actually distracts you because you create such a detailed mental image of the riverbank (look, a bird!).
- Imagine a conveyor belt. Take each thought that enters your mind and put it on the belt, then watch it go by.
- Use the troubleshooting tips for the Leaves on the stream tool if you need to.





## Scheduled worry time

If you worry a lot, this tool is for you. Worrying a lot can take up plenty of time and energy. So scheduling a regular 10-30 minutes of 'worry time' into your day lets your worries have their moment. This lets you postpone your worries until worry time - for the rest of the day, you're free to get on with things.

Type of tool	Anxiety level	Time it takes to work	Where to use it	Resources needed
 toolkit	 yellow	0-30 minutes	 alone  public	notepad or notes on phone pre-scheduled time

*Works well for:* uncomfortable thoughts and feelings; indecision; over-checking and researching; controlling things; over-planning; nitpicking and perfectionism

### How does it work and what are the benefits?

Telling you to spend time on worrying might seem weird. But if you're a worrier, 10-30 minutes a day is likely to be a lot less time than you usually spend on your worries, or even on trying not to worry, which then becomes a whole new worry. You might also think that worrying is a way of being prepared for the worst, so it almost feels like a security blanket. Either way, worrying can affect your daily activities in all the wrong ways.



Knowing that you'll have time every day to focus on what's worrying you means you'll keep worry time separate from non-worry time. You'll then have the time and energy to get things done, and you'll feel less stressed out by your worries. By practising, you'll feel more in control about when and where you worry.

Remember that 'worry time' isn't a goal in itself, but a means to an end. When you have more tools at the ready to handle your worrying, and fewer things to worry about, you won't need to schedule in your 'worry time' anymore.

### Tips and troubleshooting

It'll take a bit of practise to postpone your worries during non-worry time. Tools that can help you do this are *Grounding* (p. 55), *Thanks, mind!* (p. 68) and *Progressive muscle relaxation* (p. 51).



## Scheduled worry time

*How can I practise?*

- 1 **Start by deciding the length and place of your worry time, and keep it the same for a week**

We recommend from 10-30 minutes, and ideally at least two hours before you go to bed. Choose a place where you can be comfortable and undisturbed, but not where you'd usually relax - keep relaxation and worry separate.



10-30 mins

- 2 **Get a notepad for your worry thoughts**

Keep it handy throughout the day, or use a note-taking app on your phone to jot down worries as they come to you

- 3 **When you notice yourself worrying outside worry time, jot down the worry as briefly as you can**

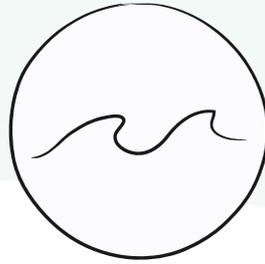
For example, 'Getting sick', 'Money', etc. It's just a reminder, not an essay. Once you've recorded a worry, put it aside and tell yourself that you'll think about it during worry time. Then throw yourself into an activity to refocus.



- 4 **When it's worry time, set an alarm and check your notes.**

Some of those worries might not bother you anymore; focus on the ones that do. Now, start worrying - go for it! You don't need to come up with solutions or try to control your thoughts (although it can be helpful to write your thoughts down so you don't carry them in your head, which can feel overwhelming and making it difficult to think). When the alarm goes off, stop worrying and physically leave your worry time space.





## Urge surfing

*Urge-surfing is a mindfulness technique that gets you to ride impulsive urges like a wave instead of acting on them.*

Type of tool	Anxiety level	Time it takes to work	Where to use it	Resources needed
 toolkit	 green yellow	seconds to minutes	  alone public	none

*Works well for:* strong urges to do something impulsive; managing actions to break vicious cycles

### What is urge-surfing?

Emotions activate your urges to do something (these are called action urges), like pulling on a lever. When you feel anxious, you might have strong urges to avoid dealing with the threat, or to reduce your anxiety by using quick fixes (like over-researching information, asking others to reassure you, having a drink, etc.). Sometimes, acting on these urges is useful: if someone sitting next to you suddenly sneezes, your urge to get away from them can make you jump back without thinking. But other times, acting on these urges can create vicious cycles – it'll make you feel better in the moment, but more stressed in the long run. When acting on an urge isn't useful for you, you can ride it like a wave to keep on top of it.

### How does it work and what are the benefits?

Urge-surfing is stepping back from potential action and noticing how the urge goes away when you don't give in to it. This trains the brain to understand that action urges are different from actions, because when you notice an urge, you choose to act on it or not. The more you act on urges by using quick fixes, the more your brain gets used to managing stress and anxiety in this way – and that's not helpful for you in the long run.

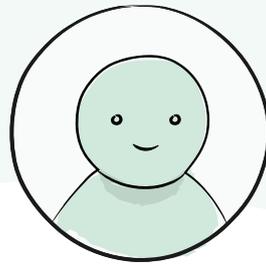
The more you train yourself to notice an urge without acting on it, the more choice you'll have in deciding how to act. Feeling more in control of your urges can make you feel more in control of your choices and your life.

### How can I practice?

Visualise yourself surfing the waves in an ocean. Imagine that your urges are like that ocean: they come and go in waves. Sometimes those waves are rough and high, sometimes they're gentler and smaller. Watch these waves rise and fall. Remember that you are not your urges – you're the surfer who rides them. Experience the waves coming and going and changing intensity. Don't try to change them – just watch how they're changing. Keep riding them like a champion surfer and notice how long it takes for your urges to go down.

### Tips and troubleshooting

Some urges last longer than others. It can be helpful to give yourself a time limit to experience strong urges, like one or five minutes. You don't have to wait for the urges to completely disappear. When they feel more under control, try using some other tools to keep lowering your stress and anxiety.



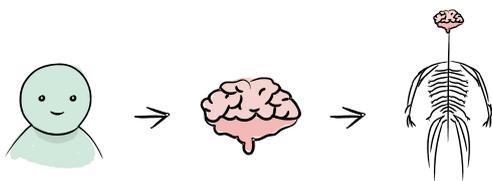
## Half-smiling

*Relaxing your facial expression to a near-smile.*

Type of tool	Anxiety level	Time it takes to work	Where to use it	Resources needed
 toolkit	 green yellow	seconds to minutes	 alone  public	none

*Works well for:* tense jaw; clenched teeth; uncomfortable thoughts and feelings; strong urges to do something impulsive; relaxing your facial expression

*How does it work and what are the benefits?*



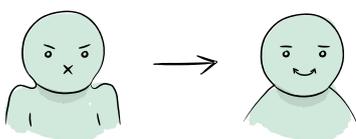
There is a connection between feeling and expressing emotions. By changing our expressions, we can make changes to how we feel. A more relaxed expression sends signals to the brain that it is okay to relax. It can help you accept the present reality, even if you don't like it or approve of it.

You don't have to smile or look like you're smiling (this is why it's called a half-smile). It is about feeling that your face muscles and lips are relaxed.

*How can I practice?*

Relax your forehead, eyes, cheeks, mouth and jaw. Relax your neck and shoulder muscles. Move the corners of your mouth slightly upwards, so your lips are relaxed. Try to have a serene expression.

You don't have to smile or look like you're smiling (this is why it's called a half-smile). It is about feeling that your face muscles and lips are relaxed.



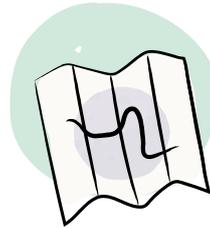
*Tips and troubleshooting*

Yes, for people who have been often told to 'put on a happy face' or 'smile,' this may feel forced. You don't have to pretend that everything is fine. This is not an exercise to make other people feel better - it is about making you feel better.

To practice, try to make a forced smile, remembering a party where you pretended to enjoy yourself and notice how that feels. Then relax your facial muscles and think about a happy memory or a cute image you've seen recently (kittens, anyone?) and notice how your face changes in response to that.



This section covered all of the Toolkit tools that you might use when you're in the yellow or green zones. Try another set of tools or choose your own adventure:



---

### Keep browsing toolkits and tools

---

[see all tools and toolkits](#)

*p. 48*

---

### Learn more about how to use tools

---

[learn how to get the most out of your tools](#)

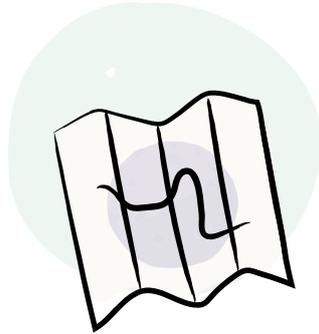
*p. 47*

[learn how to practice your tools](#)

*p. 100*

[how to put together a backpack of tools](#)

*p. 103*



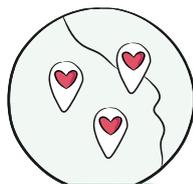
## Journey planner

The Journey Planner tools can be used to help you plan and prepare for the journey of getting through the pandemic the best way possible. They can be used when stress and anxiety is green or yellow (low or moderate) and may take a bit of time and planning. They can help you map out your support network and be more strategic with planning and preparation for stressful situations.



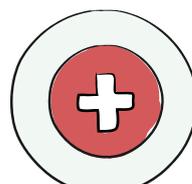
pg. 75

to-do list



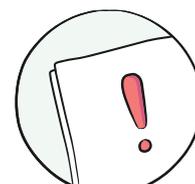
pg. 78

support mapping



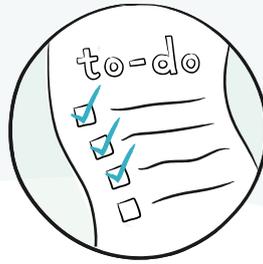
pg. 82

pro mental  
health support



pg. 83

COVID  
crisis plan



## To-do list

A to-do list is a list of tasks with clear priorities and timelines to help you keep on track. During the pandemic, while things are unpredictable and always changing, it might help you to have one or multiple lists – for example, a daily, weekly and monthly to-do list.

Type of tool	Anxiety level	Time it takes to work	Where to use it	Resources needed
 journey planner	 green yellow	need time and thinking for planning	 alone	none, or template on p. 64

**Works well for:** uncomfortable thoughts and feelings; putting things off (procrastinating); withdrawing or hiding; reassurance-seeking; nitpicking and perfectionism

### How does it work and what are the benefits?

A to-do list is a useful way of managing stress by recording what needs to be done and when. This helps you make a clear plan and saves you from worrying about trying to remember all the things you need to do. It can help you focus and feel more capable.

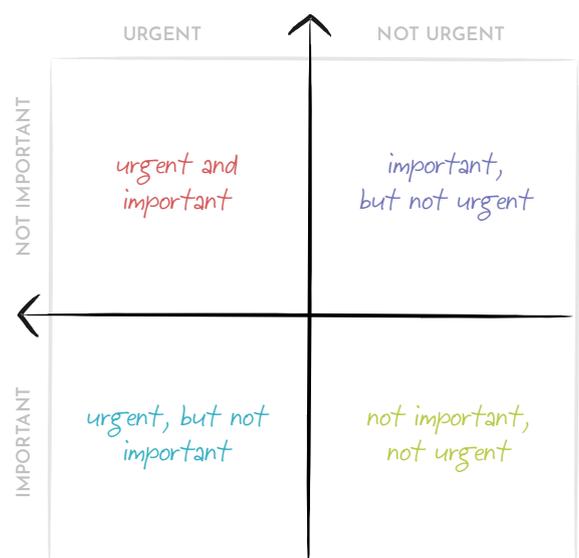
### How do I make a to-do list?

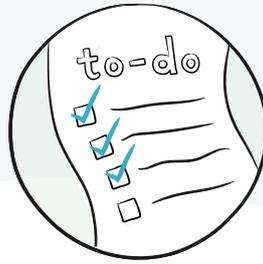
#### 1 Start by writing down the things you need to do

Some tasks are a given, like 'grocery shopping'. But you might have other things worrying you, like 'paying bills', which isn't really a clear task. To turn your worries into manageable tasks, use the Accept or change (p.x.) or Problem-solving tools (p.x.).

#### 2 Prioritise your tasks

It can be difficult to know what's most important right now, especially when you have conflicting priorities. One useful way of prioritising is to use the 'urgent-important matrix', which helps you decide make priorities based on how urgent and important something is. Go over your to-do list and note how urgent and important each task is. Then, write them in the Urgent-important matrix template (p.x.). Now you can tackle your tasks in the right order, which will help put your mind at ease.





## To-do list



urgent and important

first priorities, do asap

important, not urgent

second priority, schedule to do soon

urgent, not important

schedule for later or ask someone to do it

not important, not urgent

only do if the more important priorities are done

### 3 Select which tasks to work on

Don't overload yourself - you might only have enough time, energy and resources to focus on the first priorities for now.

### 4 Break up the priority tasks task into small, manageable chunks

Think of all steps you need to do to get each task done from start to finish. For example, instead of 'housework', list specific, individual tasks, like 'meal planning, grocery shopping, washing'.

### 5 Estimate task times

Note how long you think it will take to complete each task. Knowing that something might only take a few minutes can help make it seem more doable. It's easy to overestimate or underestimate time, so keep a record of your estimates and how long it actually takes you to complete your tasks. That way, you can allocate more (or less) time for your tasks in future.

### 6 Schedule tasks

Give yourself deadlines to complete your tasks. Set phone reminders for these deadlines or put them in your calendar.

Here's an example of a weekly to-do list. You can create your own using the [Weekly to-do list template \(p. 77\)](#).

Weekly to-do list	
MON	Schedule appointment with my GP (3 mins)
TUE	Pay electricity bill (5 mins)
WED	Health check with doctor (1 hr inc. travel) Discuss getting the flu shot Renew prescriptions Develop health management plan
THUR	
FRI	
SAT	Meal planning for the week (10 mins)
SUN	Grocery shopping (1 hr)
PRIORITIES	
<input type="checkbox"/> Health check with doctor <input type="checkbox"/> Pay bills <input type="checkbox"/> Grocery shopping	

MON

SAT

TUE

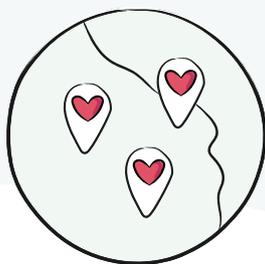
SUN

WED

PRIORITIES

THUR

FRI



## Support mapping

Support mapping is a tool for exploring and understanding your support network. We're all in this together - a pandemic is too big to manage alone. In fact, one of the jobs of stress and anxiety is to move others to help you. We can all be stronger together.

Type of tool	Anxiety level	Time it takes to work	Where to use it	Resources needed
 journey planner		need time and thinking for planning	 alone	none, or templates on p. 67 - 68

### Works well for:

disconnected from others; withdrawing or hiding; putting things off (procrastinating); reassurance-seeking

### How does it work and what are the benefits?

You can get support in many different ways. This means you need a whole network of connections:

**Emotional support** is empathy and connection, like sharing how you feel.

**Practical support** is help with practical tasks, like grocery shopping.

**Financial support** is help with money when you need it. This could come from a person or an organisation.

**Health support** is help to stay or get healthy. It can come from health professionals, or loved ones looking after you if you're sick.



By mapping out the type of support you have right now, you'll work out who you can turn to when you need a helping hand emotionally, practically, financially or health-wise. You might find you're not well supported in some areas, which means you can look at widening your support network. By mapping out who you're giving support to, you can check what you're giving versus what you're receiving and make this more fair if you need to.

### Tips and troubleshooting

Thinking about support and relationships can bring up strong emotions, especially if you feel unsupported. These COVID-19 times are pretty unusual, so the way you give and receive support at the moment may not reflect your usual circumstances.

You might end up needing a lot more support than you normally do and/or giving more than you normally do. Look at your support network in terms of your short-term (weeks), medium (months) and long-term (years) needs. Some people need more support than others, and some find it easier to give support than to receive it. However, if you feel like the support you give and receive is a bit out of whack in general, this might be a good time to make some changes.



## Support mapping

### How do I map my support network?

If you have a pretty good idea about who can support you, fill out *My support people* (p. 81). If you'd like to map out your support network, read on.

### Part 1: who can support you?

- 1 **Make a list of those in your life (friends, pets, organisations, etc.)** who can support you. Use *the template on p. 80* to get started.
- 2 **What can your people support you with?** Note if the support is emotional, practical, financial or health-related.
- 3 **When can they support you?** Everyone has different commitments, so try to consider the best times to reach out to your support people based on what they've got going on in their life. For example, early evenings might be quiet for a single person and busy for a parent.
- 4 **Consider the four support different areas.** Do you have someone for each area and time you need support in?
- 5 **Think about what to do if you have areas with no support.** Who can provide that support? Find more support by looking up and contact community and government organisations, healthcare agencies, professionals in health, finances and legal areas, etc.

Name	How can they support you?				
	Em	Prac	\$\$\$	Health	When?
Lola		X			Weekends
Weaseley	X				Evenings
Dr Montegro		X		X	Fridays 8-11am

Support you?		How can you support others?				
Who?	When?	Em	Prac	\$\$\$	Health	When?
	Weekends	X				Weekends
	Evenings		X			Evenings
	Fridays 8-11am			X		When needed

### Part 2: who can you support?

- 6 **Consider your role in others' lives.** Look at your list again. Are there some people or pets you're responsible for who aren't on the list? If there are, add them. What support can you give to others, such as people on your list? Note if it's emotional, practical, financial or health-related. When can you give support?
- 7 **Take a look at your role in others' lives.** Is it realistic in light of your current circumstances? How much time, energy, money, etc. do you have to give? Be honest: consider the resources you actually have, not the ones you wish you have. If you don't have many resources, who are your top priorities?
- 8 **Consider the balance.** Look at how much support you receive and how much you give. Is it balanced? If you give a lot more support than you receive, you might need to reach out to others more, say no or outsource some responsibilities if you can. If you receive a lot more support than you give and have some extra resources, consider what support you can offer to others.

### Part 3: list your support people

Go to p.x to list your support people so you know who to turn to and when you need a helping hand. This can also be a good reminder that you're not alone.



# My support people template

List the people who you can rely on for support in the following areas. If you're not sure who can support you, use the Support mapping tool (p.x.). If you're unsure what support you might need during the pandemic, use the COVID-19 crisis management plan (p.x.).

	who	when
Emotional support		

	who	when
Practical support		

	who	when
Financial support		

	who	when
Health support		

## COVID-19 support

If I have COVID-19-like symptoms, I'll contact these health professionals or agencies\*

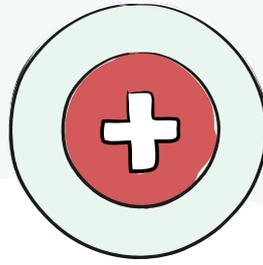
If I have COVID-19: \_\_\_\_\_  
 The person/s who can take care of me: \_\_\_\_\_  
 The person/s who can take care of my (kids/pets, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

## Crisis support

My emergency contact: \_\_\_\_\_  
 My trusted person/s who can make decisions on my behalf if I can't\*\*: \_\_\_\_\_

\*Make sure you find out the relevant official processes and protocols to follow according to your situation and location.

\*\*This is an unofficial list for your personal use. To legally appoint people who can make decisions on your behalf, you need to fill out official forms (e.g., advance health initiative, power of attorney, will). Get legal advice that's relevant to your situation and location.



## Professional support

Professional support is getting help from a health professional to improve your health and wellbeing. It's really not a big deal. You probably use professionals to help you with stuff all the time: plumbers, hairdressers, mechanics, etc. This is because they're experts in their field. And sometimes, just like you visit the hairdresser so they can improve your hairstyle, you can call on a health professional to help you improve your mental health.

Type of tool	Anxiety level	Time it takes to work	Where to use it	Resources needed
 journey planner		immediate or time needed to find resources	 alone	digital or phone access, or time and resources

*Works well for:* managing uncomfortable experiences; severe stress and anxiety

### How does it work and what are the benefits?

You'll find lots of information out there about how to manage mental health. But it can be tricky to know what's best for you as an individual. Getting professional help can give you the right tools and support for your needs and circumstances.

### Getting professional help

#### when

People often ask, 'How bad do things have to be to see someone?'. But you don't have to feel 'bad enough' to see someone - instead, think of it as taking a positive step towards managing wellbeing. It's not always an easy decision, though. You can do an online quiz [here](#) to find out more about your mental health and decide if you'd like to speak to someone: If your scores are moderate or severe, it is a good idea to seek professional help.

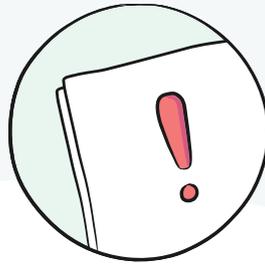
#### who, where and how *(in Australia)*

- For a useful overview of the available online and face-to-face services and tips on how to prepare to talk about mental health, visit BeyondBlue [here](#) and browse their 'Get support' menu
- If you're a young adult (18-25) or parent, you can contact Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800 or visit their website [here](#) and contact them via email or webchat
- For a summary and guide of digital mental health services to support yourself or someone else, visit Head to Health [here](#)
- Talk to your GP about who they'd recommend for you in your local area

### Tips and troubleshooting

Getting professional support doesn't necessarily have to last for ages and cost a fortune.

- If you see a health professional for a one-on-one appointment (telehealth or face-to-face), ask them how many sessions they think it will take to work on your goals.
- You can always get in touch with online services and helplines if you need to, even if it's a one-off. You can contact them via text, webchat, email or phone, and it doesn't usually cost anything.
- If you're on a tight budget, ask your GP for a Mental Health Care Plan and see if they know mental health professionals who have a sliding scale for fees or bulk bill.



## COVID-19 crisis management plan

A crisis management plan means you're hoping for the best, but preparing for the worst. A COVID-19 crisis management plan helps you think about how to prepare in case you get sick with COVID-19.

Type of tool	Anxiety level	Time it takes to work	Where to use it	Resources needed
 journey planner		needs time to prepare and implement	 alone	Need time and thinking for planning

*Works well for:* uncomfortable thoughts and feelings; withdrawing or hiding; denial

*How does it work and what are the benefits?*

By creating a crisis management plan, you can problem-solve ahead of time, when you're well enough to do so. Hopefully you won't need to use this plan, but just knowing it's there will give you peace of mind

*How can I create a COVID-19 crisis management plan?*

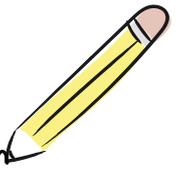
Follow these simple crisis-planning steps:

**Create** a crisis management plan using the prompts below.

**Communicate** your plan to your loved ones and people in your support network.

**Evaluate** your plan if and when circumstances change.

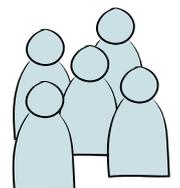
Everyone's approach to making a crisis plan will be different - there's no single 'correct' version of the plan. We've listed some topics below and on the following page for you to think about when you make yours, and a checklist you can use as reminder for your plan.

*crisis management plan* 

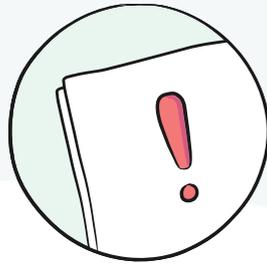
### 1 Collect emergency contact numbers

Make a list of important phone numbers. Give a copy to people who need to know what's happening to you and how to help you. Here are some numbers you might want to include:

- doctors
- emergency services (ambulance, police, etc.)
- community organisations and resources (e.g., helplines, hotlines, etc.)
- important people who need to know about your wellbeing (family, friends, colleagues, etc.)



Use the Support mapping tool (p. 72) to understand your support needs.



## COVID-19 crisis management plan

### 2 Plan for resources

Plan to have enough resources to last you about four weeks. Stock up on the following if you can:

- essential items (food, medication and cleaning supplies like soap, sanitisers, cleaning products, toilet paper, sanitary products, etc.)
- finances so you can pay your bills. If you're worried about money running out, make a Plan B for financial support. Search for and contact people and organisations that can provide financial help. This can include government and community organisations, banks, friends, family, etc. It can feel awkward and embarrassing to talk about money, but these are tough times - you're not alone, and everybody needs help sometimes.

### 3 Plan for getting sick with COVID-19

- Nominate the person/people who can help you.
- If you have dependents (kids, pets, others you care for, etc.), list who can look after them if you can't.
- If you live with others, plan how you can isolate yourself at home so they don't get sick too. What do they need to protect themselves (cleaning or sanitising products, protective equipment like face masks, etc.)?
- Think about what information others might need to help you. Does a trusted person need to know your online passwords in case you can't access them? Does someone need a spare key to your house?

### 4 Plan in case you can't speak for yourself

Plan to help loved ones manage your legal, financial, health and personal decisions if you can't. Three documents that can be really helpful here are an Advance Health Directive, a Power of Attorney and a Will.

- an **Advance Health Directive** lets others know your wishes and directions about medical treatment when you're so unwell that you're not able to speak or make decisions for yourself.
- **Power of Attorney** gives the legal power to a person/s you choose to make decisions on your behalf. These can be financial matters and/or personal and health matters.
- a **Will** lets others know how you want to distribute your assets and who you'd like to care for your dependents (like children and pets) if you're no longer around.

### Checklist for your crisis management plan

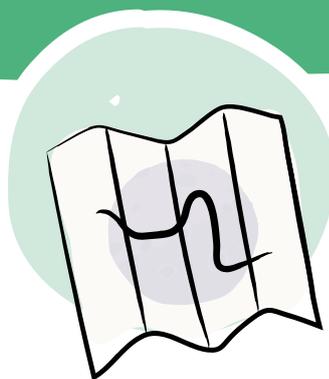
Use the *To-do list tool* (p. 75) to create crisis management plan tasks for these areas:

- **emergency contact numbers**
- **essential items (food, medications, etc.)**
- **Plan B for finances**
- **plan for managing a case of COVID-19**
- **plan in case you can't speak for yourself**

### Tips and troubleshooting

These might be difficult and uncomfortable things to think about and discuss. But there's an upside: making this plan means you're creating opportunities to connect with loved ones, express love and care, and prepare yourself in case of an emergency. If it makes you stressed or anxious, try a few tools to get your thinking brain back again.

This section covered all of the Journey map tools that you might use when you're in the yellow or green zones. Try another set of tools or choose your own adventure:



---

### Keep browsing toolkits and tools

---

[see all tools and toolkits](#)

*p. 48*

---

### Learn more about how to use tools

---

[learn how to get the most out of your tools](#)

*p. 47*

[learn how to practice your tools](#)

*p. 100*

[how to put together a backpack of tools](#)

*p. 103*



## Lunchbox

The Lunchbox tools can be used to nourish your body and mind to keep you as strong as possible. They can be used when stress and anxiety is green or yellow (low or moderate). Some of the Lunchbox tools may take a bit of time and effort to implement, but they tend to be worth the effort. These tools work on keeping your baseline low by increasing your general wellbeing. The lower your *baseline* is, the more resilient you are to deal with stressful things (p. 11).



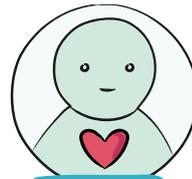
pg. 87

body care



pg. 92

mind care



pg. 94

self-care



pg. 96

cheerleading



pg. 97

self-compassion



## Body care

Taking care of your physical body to improve your wellbeing

Type of tool	Anxiety level	Time it takes to work	Where to use it	Resources needed
 lunchbox		need time to plan and implement	 alone	none

*Works well for:* increasing physical and inner body wellbeing; sleep difficulties; fatigued and tired

### How does it work and what are the benefits?

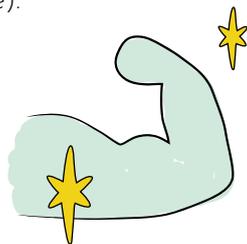
The healthier and more balanced your physical body is, the more resilient you'll become. Practicing body care might include:

get enough sleep  
 resist overusing alcohol and drugs  
 regular exercise  
 maintain balanced nutrition  
 attend to your physical health

### How can I practice?

Physical health impacts our mental health and how we manage stress and anxiety. During the pandemic, it's especially important to keep physically healthy - it increases your chances of recovery if you get sick (with COVID-19 or something else).

Check out the tools on the following page to see if there are any areas you can improve to increase your health.



### Tips and troubleshooting

Taking care of your body can be easier said than done. But a small change is better than no change. Try to make one small change at a time. Celebrate each success and build on every one.

- Use your support network to help with changes. Try the [Support mapping tool \(p. 78\)](#), or [Professional support \(p. 82\)](#) for ideas.
- Use [Pros and cons \(p. 62\)](#) and the [To-do list \(p. 75\)](#) to help make and follow up on changes.



## Body care

### Get enough sleep

Sleep can be a really helpful way to balance your stress and wellbeing. But how much sleep do you actually need? You've probably heard that eight hours is the gold standard, but people's sleep needs vary from between seven to 10 hours. A lot of people have sleep difficulties, especially during stressful times. Here's what you can do to get a better night's sleep:

**Stick to set times:** try to go to bed and wake up at the same time each day (as much as possible). Your body will get used to the rhythm of when to sleep and when to be awake.

**Put your phone and any other clocks out of sight** (and reach) of your bed before you go to sleep. Do you really need to know what time it is unless your alarm rings? Checking the time will likely get you stressed about how much time you have left to sleep - and that's not exactly relaxing.

You can't control when you fall asleep, but you can **control when you wake up** (even if it feels hard). Try to avoid hitting the snooze button multiple times or staying in bed for hours after you wake up. Avoid napping during the day, otherwise you might not be tired enough to sleep when your scheduled bedtime arrives. If you do nap, keep it short (ideally less than an hour) and as far away from your bedtime as possible.

**Keep your bed and bedroom nice and tidy** to create a relaxing environment for yourself.

**Only use your bed for sleep and intimacy.** Working, chilling, gaming or watching movies in bed can actually confuse your body and mind, because they turn your bed into a place for activities rather than rest.



**Develop a 'wind-down routine'** about an hour before bedtime. During this time, try a few relaxing activities that can calm you down rather than activate your mind and body.

*Things to avoid during your wind-down routine:*

**Caffeine** (including caffeinated coffee, tea, sodas and energy drinks), **alcohol, nicotine, very spicy foods** and **heavy meals**. Try not to have these within four hours of bedtime.

**Bright lights** and **blue lights** (yes, that means your phone, tablet and laptop). Try to avoid these about an hour before bedtime.

*Things to try during your wind-down routine:*

paced breathing

pg. 50

progressive muscle relaxation

pg. 51

unglue from worry thoughts

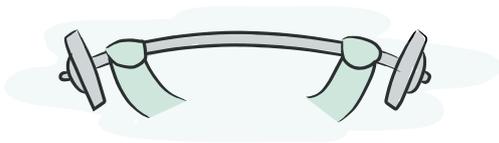
pg. 67



## Body care

### Regular exercise

Exercise is super important for your physical and mental health. Remember how stress and anxiety change your *physical experiences (p. 18)*? Well, regular exercise can help manage lots of those experiences. It can also improve your sleep, mood, fitness, immune system and mental clarity. Although there's no direct link between fitness and coronavirus, exercise improves blood flow and cardiovascular fitness, which are important if you get the virus. When you're sick, your cells have less oxygen to work with, which is kind of like what happens to your cells when you exercise - so think of exercise as like a training program for your cells.



There's no one-size-fits-all exercise program, so find what's right for you and consider your fitness level, injuries, etc. Aim to exercise regularly - ideally every day, even if it's just for 10 minutes. If you can, mix up the kind of exercise you do. Try a combination of the following:

**Cardiovascular exercise** ('cardio' or 'aerobic exercise') is important for keeping your heart and lungs healthy. You can do this kind of exercise without any special equipment. Try running and walking (if you're not in isolation), squats, lunges, star jumps, etc.

**Resistance training** helps build muscle strength by getting your muscles work against resistance. Try exercises that use weights, resistance bands or your own body weight, like push-ups, bicep curls, deadlifts, etc.

**Core and glute stability work** can help take care of your back and knees. Try Pilates, yoga, etc. You don't even have to sign up to a class - you can find lots of free yoga and Pilates exercise videos on YouTube.

If you're unsure what types of exercise are safe or beneficial for you, talk to a doctor or health professional.

### Resist overusing alcohol and drugs

Using drugs and alcohol is a common quick fix for managing stress and anxiety, but it comes with many unhealthy side effects. Look up the current guidelines for your country, state and personal situation to check the recommended use of alcohol and drugs (including prescription and over-the-counter medications). If you use more than the recommended amounts, or your friends and family express concerns about your substance use, talk to someone about how to manage this (*check out Professional support on p. 82*).





## Body care

### Balanced nutrition

Nutrition has become a pretty confusing area - there's lots of conflicting advice out there. During stressful times, like this pandemic, you might overeat to manage stress or boredom, or undereat because you've lost your appetite. Whatever your situation, you might be tempted to make a change to your eating habits and try a specific diet. But unless a health professional recommends that you try a diet, it's generally safer and easier to make small, sustainable changes.

Just like with exercise, there's no one-size-fits-all nutrition plan. But there are some general guidelines that can help improve your nutrition and, in turn, your overall health.

Nutrition is fuel for your body, so it has a big effect on your mental and physical health. Your nutritional intake (i.e., how many vitamins and minerals you're getting, like calcium, B12, folate, iron, etc.) can influence your sugar, insulin and inflammation levels, and how much energy you have. Your weight can impact your health, too. How you relate to and manage your weight can be complicated.

If you're concerned about your diet and nutrition, eating habits, weight or the way you feel about your size and shape, talk to a health professional. GPs and dietitians can develop a suitable nutrition plan for you. Psychologists and some dietitians can help improve how you feel about eating and yourself.

### General guidelines

**Eat regularly:** three main meal and two snacks

**Keep hydrated:** drink enough water

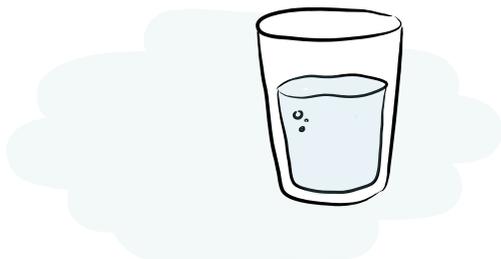
**Eat more:** vegetables, fruit, wholegrains (e.g., wheat, oat, rice etc.), lean protein (e.g., beans, peas, lentils, fish)

**Eat less:** processed food, sugars, starches, saturated fat, red meat



#### Eat mindfully:

- *Eat slowly.* Focus on and appreciate your food when you're eating: notice its taste, colour, texture, smell, temperature, sound, etc.
- *Notice your hunger:* is it physical or emotional?
- *Notice when you're full:* it may take about 20 minutes for your brain to register that your stomach is full so try not to eat too fast. Be mindful of portions, too - the size of some ready-made meals and takeaway might not suit your body (can be too large or too small).



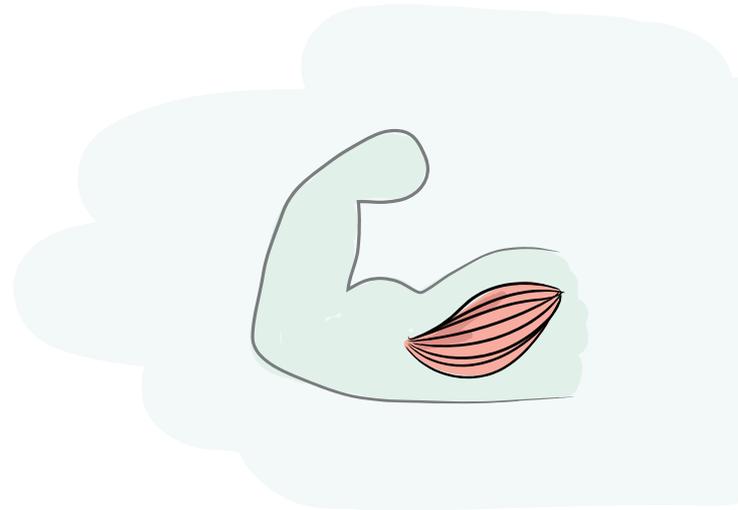


## Body care

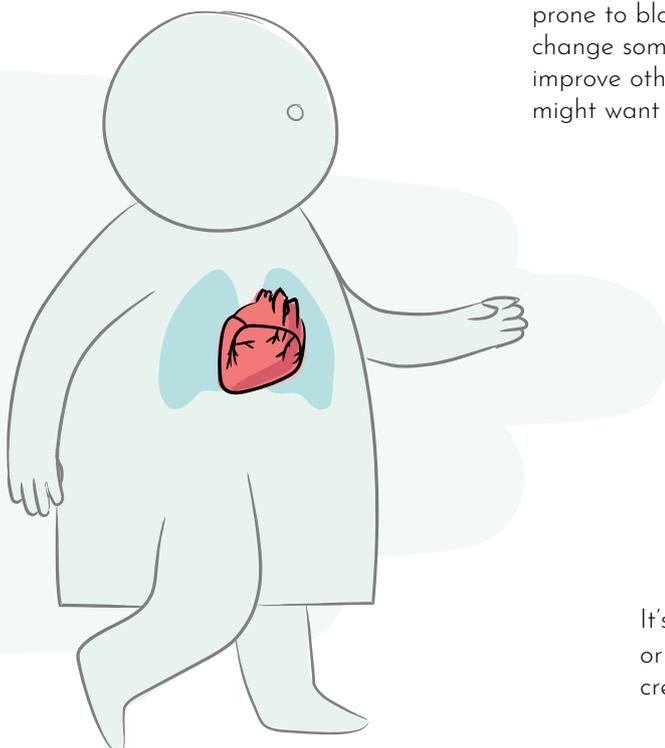
### Attend to your physical health

Physical health is an essential part of your wellbeing. It's totally normal to be concerned about the physical threat of COVID-19 right now, but it's important to be aware of other physical health issues too. For example, you might have existing physical conditions. It's important to manage these so they don't get worse. Stick to your treatment plan (including taking any prescribed medications). If you don't have any pre-existing conditions, or not sure if you have a health condition, get a check-up and, if you need one, a treatment plan.

To minimise the risk of getting COVID-19, check the current guidelines relevant to your country, state and personal situation. As this is a new virus, we don't fully understand why people experience its symptoms differently: some have no symptoms, others may have them mildly, moderately or severely.

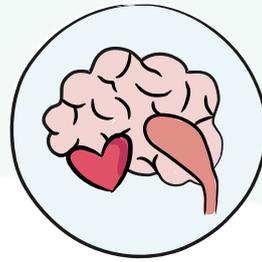


At this point, it seems that certain factors lead to more severe symptoms and outcomes that affect recovery: poor cardiovascular fitness, high blood pressure, lung disease, diabetes, weakened immune system, overweight, prone to blood clotting, advanced age, certain medications. You can't change some of these factors - advanced age, for example - but you can improve others by consulting a doctor. These are some of the things you might want to talk to your doctor about:



- assessing your general health, including your heart and lungs
- knowing which vaccinations may be useful (although there's currently no vaccination for COVID-19, a flu or pneumonia vaccine may help lower your risk of getting other viruses)
- having a suitable treatment plan, including the correct medications if you need them, to manage your health in the best possible way.

It's never too late to start looking after your health, pandemic or no pandemic. Use the [Self-care template \(p. 95\)](#) to create a plan to increase your wellbeing and resilience.



## Mind care

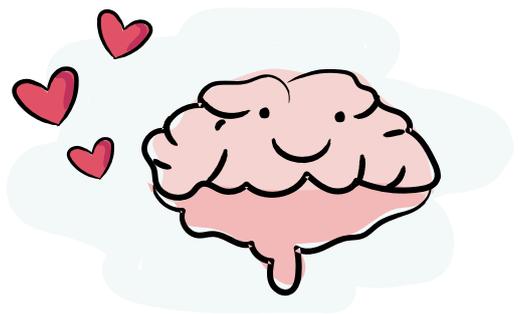
Mind care is taking care of your mental wellbeing.

Type of tool	Anxiety level	Time it takes to work	Where to use it	Resources needed
 lunchbox	 green yellow	need time to plan and implement	 alone	none

*Works well for:* increasing inner body wellbeing | fatigued and tired | managing actions through keeping well

### How does it work and what are the benefits?

Caring for your mind means building up positive experiences and resources to balance out stressful events. A pandemic is a really stressful time, so you might need to make extra effort to have positive experiences and feel like you're more in charge of the pandemic and your situation.



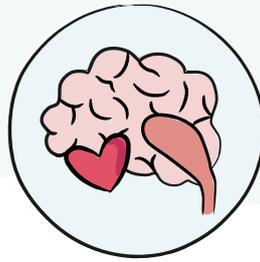
### How can I practice?

Check out the list on the next page for examples of positive emotions and resources. Think of what activities can help you feel those emotions or find those resources. You might have different needs to what's listed below, and that's fine - focus on what's important to you. When you feel stressed or anxious, it's important to plan for positive experiences, as they might not happen without a little help from you. When you have a positive experience, pay attention to it so you can really enjoy it.

### Tips and troubleshooting

It can be hard to make time to feel good and care for yourself. It can also be hard to give yourself the permission to do it. When you're busy, self-care might seem lazy or self-indulgent. Or you might think you haven't done enough to deserve any time off. But taking care of yourself is a necessity, not an indulgence.

Think about recharging as a way of helping yourself function well. If your phone's running out of battery, what do you do? You charge it so it can keep working without running out of juice. When you get used to taking time out for self-care, you'll feel more energised and less guilty. Give it a go!



## Mind care

### Meaning

Having a sense of purpose gives your actions meaning and motivation to our actions. People are different in what they find meaningful. You may have a strong sense of purpose or may have to think about it to clarify. Examples of things that help finding meaning: read about other people's meaning and purpose; turn your focus away from your suffering by contributing to other people's wellbeing or a cause you can relate to; listen to what other people appreciate about you to reflect on your strengths.

### Gratitude

Gratitude is appreciating the good things you have without dismissing the other stuff - the stuff that isn't so good. Focus on something that's going well in your life and be thankful for it. Try keeping a gratitude journal - note the things you're thankful for (every day or once a week), like nice weather, being healthy or having a good friend, etc.

### Mastery

Mastery is doing things that make you feel competent, capable, confident and prepared. Do something every day that gives you a sense of accomplishment. Try things that challenge you, but that you can achieve - for example, learning a new skill, exercising, keeping on top of housework or doing something you've been putting off.

### Connection

Spend time with people who share your interests and values and understand your vulnerability. Think about the relationships you have that allow you to experience love, care, compassion and understanding. These relationships could be with other people and animals or with a higher power, like spirituality, religion, nature, etc.

### Limit info searches

Limiting how much time you spend looking up COVID-related information. Spend that time on something pleasant instead. Work out the minimum amount of information you need to stay informed about the pandemic and stick to your limit.- maybe no more than 10 minutes a day.

### Relaxation and self-soothing

Give yourself a break and recharge your energy. Figure out what helps you unwind and use your senses to relax and revive yourself.

Here are some examples:

**vision:** look at art, browse old photos, wander through nature

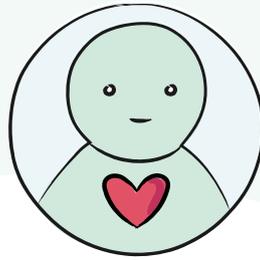
**hearing:** listen to music, hum or sing, listen to a podcast, put in headphones to screen out noise and enjoy the quiet

**smell:** light a candle, smell your favourite food or drink, take a shower with your favourite shower gel, put on perfume or aftershave

**taste:** enjoy some of your favourite foods or drinks and savour the taste

**touch:** wear comfortable clothes, wrap yourself in a nice blanket, pet an animal, hug a loved one, rub your shoulders, have a shower or bath

**relaxation:** listen to guided relaxation exercises, mindfulness or meditation. *Practise Paced breathing* (p. 50) or *Progressive muscle relaxation* (p. 51). Try relaxing activities like watching a movie, reading a book or doing some exercise.



## Self-care

Self-care means taking care of your own needs to manage your wellbeing.

Type of tool	Anxiety level	Time it takes to work	Where to use it	Resources needed
 lunchbox	 green yellow	need time to plan and implement	 alone	none, or self-care template on p. 57

*Works well for:* increasing physical and inner body wellbeing



*How does it work and what are the benefits?*

Understanding your needs and making a commitment to meet them will improve your health, wellbeing and resilience.

*How can I practice?*

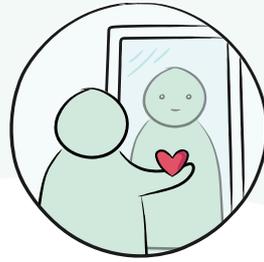
Use the *Body care (p. 87)* and *Mind care (p. 92)* tools as guides to understand what you need. Use the *template (p. 95)* to plan for those needs. Review it every few weeks to see if the plan still suits you.

My self-care areas	My needs	My plan
body	increase exercise	do stretches for 10 mins every evening while watching a movie
	sleep 8 hours	go to bed at 9:30, wake up at 6
	limit drinking	only drink on fri and sat nights, 2 drinks max
mind	increase connections	schedule virtual catch-up with my friends for sat nights check in with someone every day
	more relaxation	take 10 mins at lunchtime for relaxation and self-soothing
	limit info search	only check one info site a day for max 5 minutes

# Self-care template

My self-care areas	My needs	My plan
body		
mind		





## Self compassion

Self-compassion is treating yourself with the kindness and warmth you give your loved ones. Instead of being harsh and critical, self-compassion means trying to be understanding and caring without wallowing in self-pity or not taking responsibility for your actions.

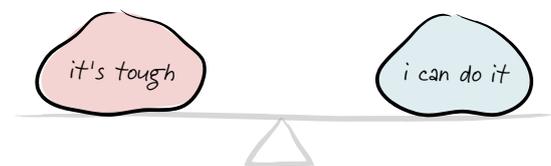
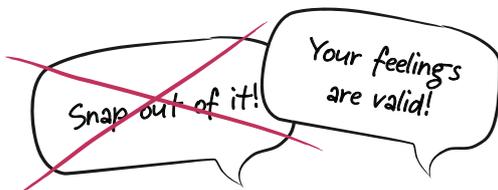
Type of tool	Anxiety level	Time it takes to work	Where to use it	Resources needed
 lunchbox		seconds to minutes	 alone  public	none

*Works well for:* uncomfortable thoughts and feelings; disconnected from yourself

### How does it work and what are the benefits?

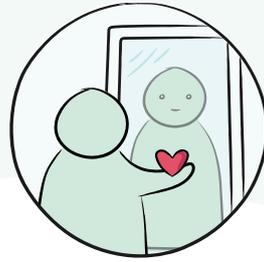
There are three main components of self-compassion:

- 1 Be understanding and kind to yourself when you're having a rough time or feeling down instead of being self-critical or telling yourself to 'snap out of it'. When you already feel bad, being harsh on yourself makes things worse because then you feel bad about two things: the original problem plus the added frustration of telling yourself how stupid or inadequate you are. Being kind to yourself can prevent this spiral.
- 2 Connect to the shared human experience to feel less isolated and more connected. We all feel bad sometimes and we all make mistakes.
- 3 Balance your emotions to help validate the pain you're feeling without dismissing it or wallowing in it.



### Tips and troubleshooting

Practising self-compassion might feel weird and uncomfortable at first, especially if you're used to treating yourself harshly. If you feel like your emotions are running high, go slow and gentle - it's not a race. Use other tools to manage your uncomfortable experiences, then practise self-compassion when you're feeling calm.



## Self compassion

### How can I practice?

Self-compassion can take a bit of getting used to. Try scheduling a short daily practise for a week and see how you go. Here are some useful reminders that can help you:



### Be kind to yourself

Treat yourself like you'd treat a loved one. Think about a time when your best friend was anxious or stressed and you gave them support. How did you treat them? Think about your tone and manner towards them rather than the advice you gave. Were you kind, caring, warm, compassionate? It's not about what you said, but how you said it. Use the same tone and manner when you talk to yourself.

### Loving kindness meditation

This pandemic has affected all of us in so many ways. You're not alone. Loving kindness meditation is sending good wishes to loved ones, including yourself. Practising this can be a lot like saying a prayer for yourself and the people you care about. Start by thinking of a mantra you can repeat - for example:

*May they be healthy, may they be happy, may they be safe*

Start by relaxing your posture and breathing. Think about specific people in a loving way and say to yourself:

*May x be healthy, may x be happy, may x be safe*

*May I be healthy, may I be happy, may I be safe*

Finish by wishing yourself well.

### Manage painful thoughts and feelings mindfully

Allow your painful experiences to just be there, but don't let them overtake you. Try naming these experiences by saying how they made you feel - for example:

*"This is really stressful for me!"*

You can also try:

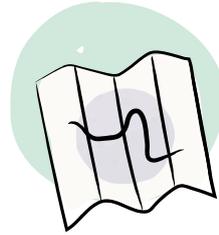
leaves on the stream

pg. 68

cheerleading tools

pg. 96

This section covered all of the Lunchbox tools that you might use when you're in the yellow or green zones. Try another set of tools or choose your own adventure:



---

### Keep browsing toolkits and tools

---

[see all tools and toolkits](#)

*p. 48*

---

### Learn more about how to use tools

---

[learn how to get the most out of your tools](#)

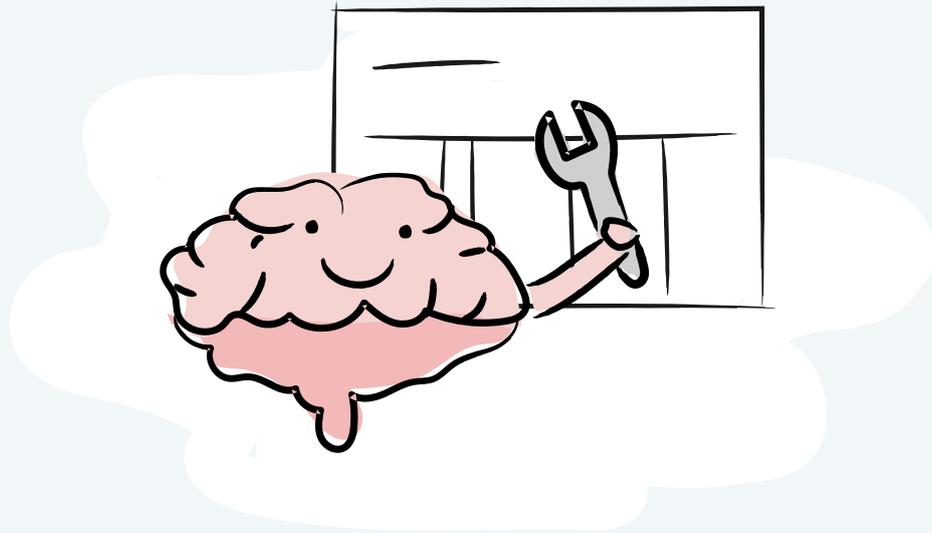
*p. 47*

[learn how to practice your tools](#)

*p. 100*

[how to put together a backpack of tools](#)

*p. 103*



## How to practice your tools

how to practice

*p. 101*

practice sheet template

*p. 102*

# How to practice

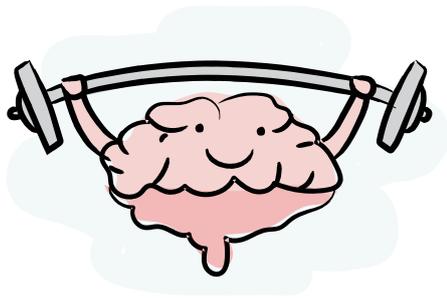
The *practice sheet (p. 97)* will help you track how and when different tools work for you. Something that works when you're alone may not be practical to do in public. Understanding what works and when will allow you to pack your backpack so you're ready when stress and anxiety hit. Here's how to fill out your practice sheet.

*how long you used it for*

*10 = highest anxiety*

*how'd it go?*

Date	Tool I tried	Minutes	Tried to manage	Location	With	Anxiety before (0-10)	Anxiety after (0-10)	Outcomes and notes
01/9	paced breathing	5	racing heart	home	alone	9	3	would work in public too
12/10	half-smile	3	tense jaw	work	others	5	2	felt a bit silly but not too bad
13/11	counting my breath	1	mind going blank	home	alone	8	9	got distracted couldn't focus

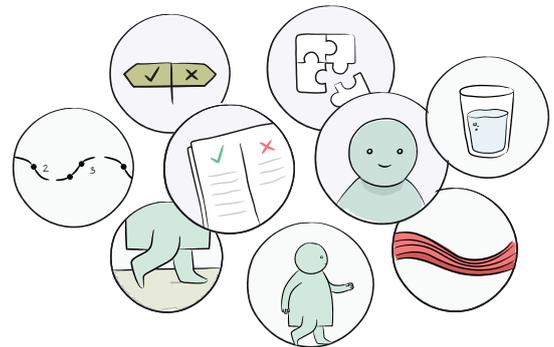


Practising and trying out tools lets you choose the right ones for the right times. It also gives you the knowledge and confidence to apply them when you really need them. The more you practise using the tools, the more effective they'll be.



**you can add these to your backpack (p. 103)**

Try out new tools when you're in the **green** or **yellow zone**, so your thinking brain can take in new information and learn from it.



Sometimes you may need to use multiple tools to bring down severe stress and anxiety. The "your backpack" tool helps you get a list of tools together that work for you in the yellow and red zones. Having a list can help you (and your loved ones) to know what to do when you need it the most and it's hard to think.





## How to pack your bag of tools

what is your backpack?

*p. 104*

how to pack

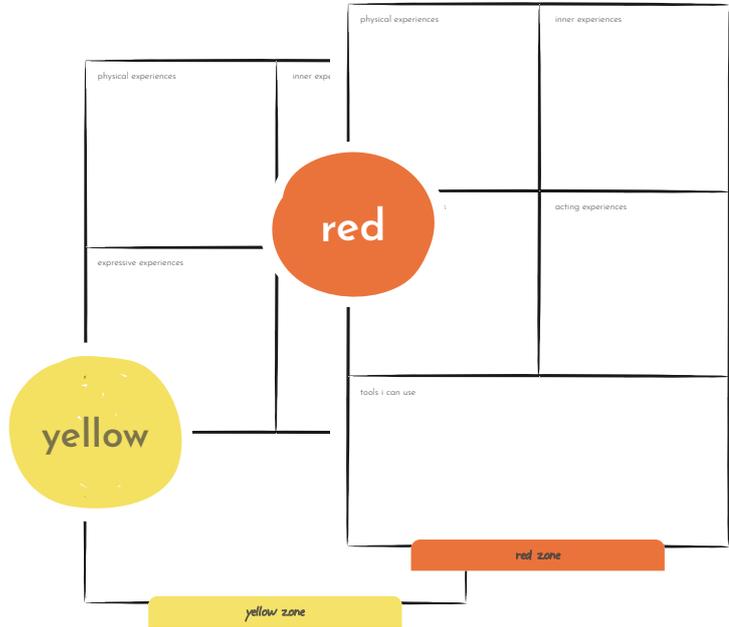
*p. 105*

backpack templates

*p. 107*

# What is your backpack?

Your backpack is a handy list of tools that help you manage your unique stress and anxiety when in you're the yellow (moderate) or red (severe) zone. As you use your backpack, managing anxiety will become second nature and soon enough you won't need a reminder.



pg. 107 pack for the yellow zone

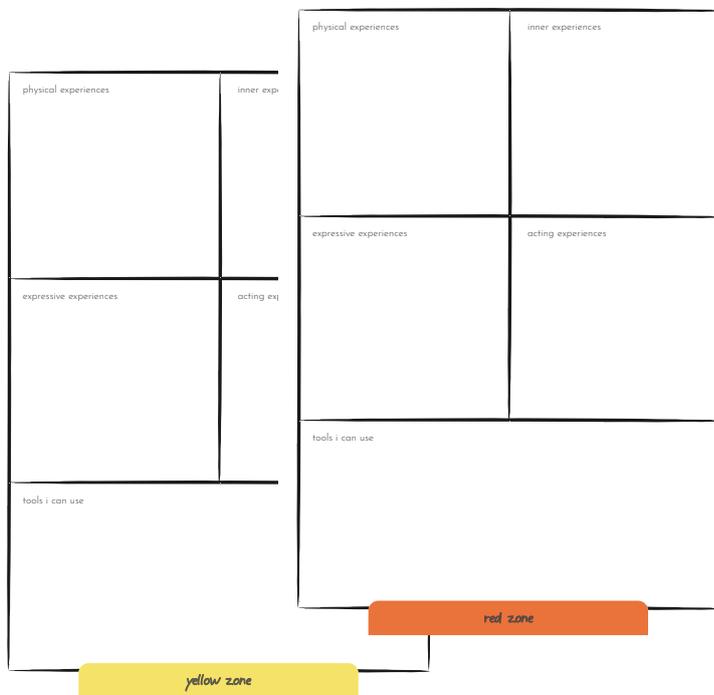
pg. 108 pack for the red zone



# How to pack

## using your backpack

Because high anxiety and stress can impact our thinking brain, it can be difficult to think about what to do when you need it the most. Packing your backpack in advance gets your tools ready to be handy when you need them. The backpack has two parts:



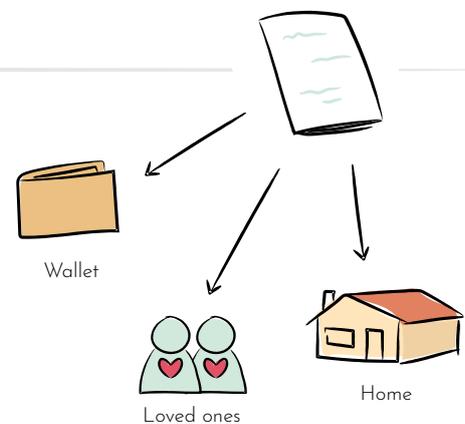
### four bodies

The top part is your **four bodies**. Understanding how you experience stress and anxiety can help you notice the first signs of your anxiety rising, so you can manage it as soon as possible. You can then match the experiences with the right tools.

### tools

The bottom part is your **tools**. Your backpack has specific tools that help you manage your anxiety when you're in the yellow (moderate) or red (severe) zone.

You can print out your backpack and fold it up to carry it with you as a reminder and keep copies in different places. You can also give a copy to the important people in your life. If others understand the visible signs of your anxiety (your expressions and actions), they can help recommending tools to support you.

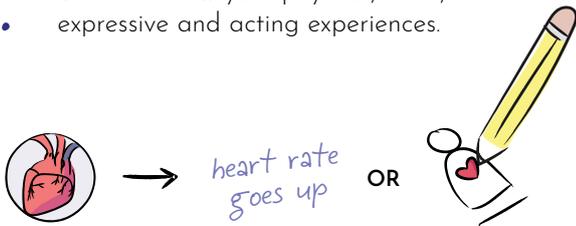


# How to pack

## a step-by-step guide

To pack your backpack, match your experiences with the right tools. Use the Your backpack template on p. xx and start with the **yellow zone**, then repeat with the **red zone**.

1. Write or draw your physical, inner, expressive and acting experiences.



physical experiences blushing tense jaw goose bumps	inner experiences catastrophising denial
expressive experiences nail biting	acting experiences

Physical body



pg. 19

Inner body



pg. 26

Expressive body



pg. 33

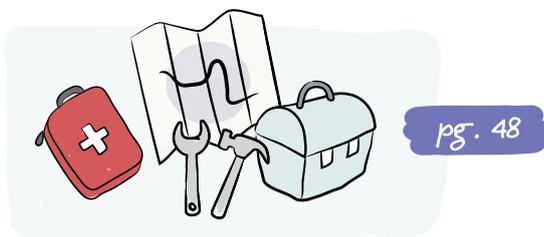
Acting body



pg. 39

2. For a reminder of some common experiences of stress and anxiety, look at the **physical**, **inner**, **expressive** and **acting** experiences

3. Find and try out different tools to see what works for you. You can browse tools by **type** or **body**



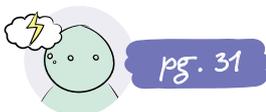
pg. 48



pg. 24



pg. 37

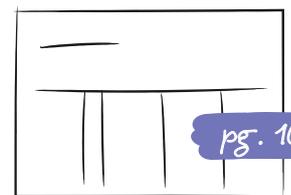
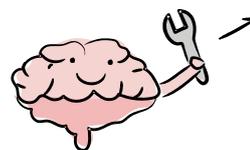


pg. 31



pg. 42

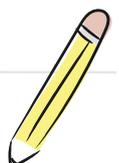
Try out tools using the **practise sheet**



pg. 102

tools i can use

unglue from worry thoughts



4. If the tool works, add it to your **backpack**. If it doesn't, try another or keep practising. There are plenty of tools - you'll find enough to fill your bag

physical experiences

inner experiences

expressions

actions

tools i can use

*yellow zone*

physical experiences

inner experiences

expressions

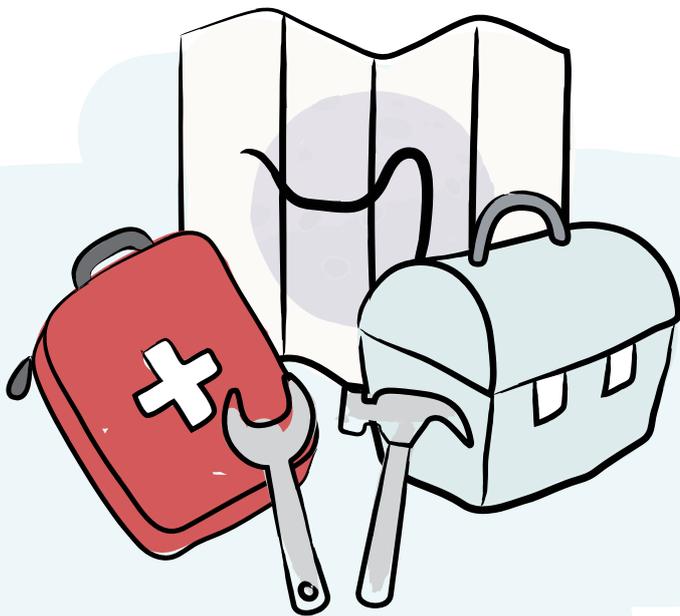
actions

tools i can use

red zone

# Summary

In this section we introduced different tools that can be used to manage a range of experiences, during low, moderate and severe stress and anxiety. We hope you now have a set of tools for your backpack and the know-how on how to manage stress and anxiety more effectively.



learn more  
about stress  
and anxiety

p. 5



get to know  
your own stress  
and anxiety

p. 16

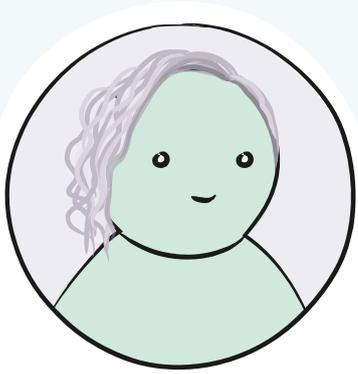
let us  
know what  
you think!

We'd like to know your opinion on this guide to help us develop better resources in the future! Follow the links for an anonymous online survey - it takes about 5 minutes to fill out.

i'm an individual

i'm a health professional

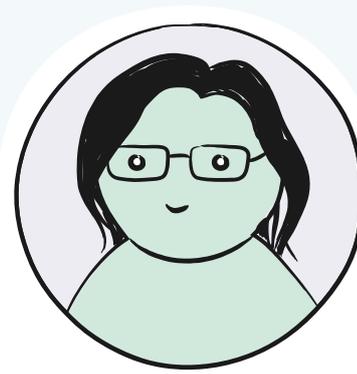
## About the authors



Lutz Ireland

PSYCHOLOGIST + DESIGNER

Lutz is a psychologist and design researcher. She's passionate about improving mental health literacy—the skills and knowledge of managing mental health in self and others. As a mental health professional, she's worked with individuals, couples, groups and organisations. As a designer, she submitted her doctoral research on developing a conceptual framework and visual language for communicating mental health information to increase mental health literacy. She uses design thinking and co-design methods to develop innovative resources, services and systems for mental health and wellbeing.



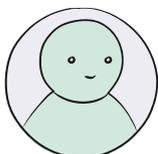
Cedric Chu

DOCTOR

Cedric is a doctor known for thinking outside the box and has a strong focus on evolutionary psychology. He has travelled to 70 countries around the world to help him gain a practical understanding of human evolution. He has developed a new approach to understanding and managing the unique talents of ADHD and Autistic people in the workplace and applying this to maximising performance for individuals and businesses. He is also a generalist doctor which enables him to keep abreast across a wide range of medical problems.

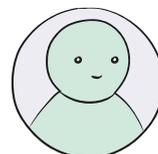
---

## the team



Jessica Cheers

DESIGNER + ILLUSTRATOR



Carody Culver

EDITOR



## About the guide

This guide was developed using a range of sources and methods.

### Health information content

The health information in this guide is based on evidence-based approaches that include cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT), acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT), evolutionary psychology, mindfulness and compassion (*See references on p. 114*).

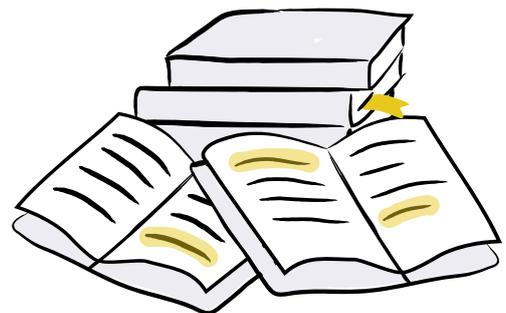
### Concept and design

The guide's concept is an extension of Lutza's PhD research on developing and evaluating an anxiety guide prototype using design thinking and co-design methods through a series of design workshops with community members, carers and mental health professionals.

The concept design of this guide was informed by surveying over 100 individuals to explore their real-life concerns around stress and anxiety during the pandemic. Lutza and Cedric merged these survey responses using their hands-on practice experience and evidence-based health information. The final prototype of this guide was tested with community members and health professionals to improve its relevance and usability.

### Future directions

Based on the community's survey responses, the purpose of this guide was to offer individuals a basic set of principles to understand and manage stress and anxiety in themselves and others during the COVID pandemic. However, as stress and anxiety are influenced by what's going on in people's lives and the world they live in, managing these experiences is not an individual issue - it must be addressed as a systemic issue. We are hoping to develop further resources and services to improve mental health literacy at community, organizational and government levels, too.





## Acknowledgements

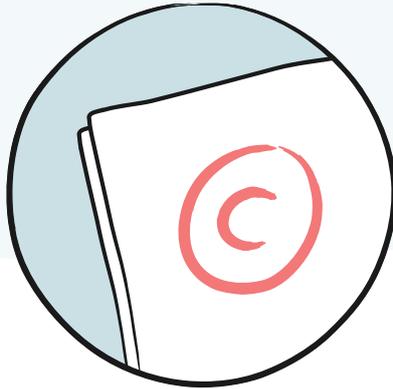
### Thank you

- to all survey respondents who helped us with scoping and user testing this guide
- to all the participants who contributed to the co-design and evaluation of the initial anxiety guide prototype, and Winnie Tran for her graphic design input
- to Dr Oksana Zelenko for her continuous guidance and mentorship
- to our families for their loving support, which enabled us to develop this guide as fast as possible

---

This guide is an extension of Lutz's PhD research, which was supported by QUT, the Australian Government (via the Research Training Program Scheme) and the ARC Linkage Project Grant Scheme, with funding provided by Yourtown, the Australian Research Council and QUT.

The authors would like to acknowledge the Turrbal and Yugara peoples as the traditional owners of the lands on which they live and work, and pay respect to their elders past, present and emerging

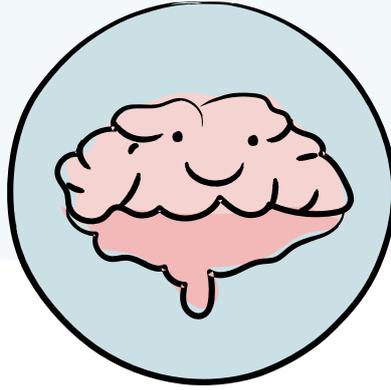


# Copyright and licensing

## Limited duplication licence

This resource is free to download and reproduce for an individual's personal use or for a health professional's use with clients. Permission to reproduce or display this resource for any other purpose must be obtained in writing from [admin@matrixdh.com](mailto:admin@matrixdh.com) and may involve a licensing fee.

Ireland and Chu © 2020



## References

Fredrickson, B. (2009). *Positivity*. Harmony.

Forsyth, J. P., & Eifert, G. H. (2016). *The mindfulness and acceptance workbook for anxiety: A guide to breaking free from anxiety, phobias, and worry using acceptance and commitment therapy*. New Harbinger Publications.

Harris, R. (2011). *The happiness trap*. ReadHowYouWant. com.

Leahy, R. L., Holland, S. J., & McGinn, L. K. (2011). *Treatment plans and interventions for depression and anxiety disorders*. Guilford press.

Linehan, M. (2014). *DBT Skills training manual*. Guilford Publications.

Linehan, M. M. (2014). *DBT Skills Training Handouts and Worksheets*. Guilford Publications.

Neff, K. (2011). *Self compassion*. Hachette UK.

Perlman, R. (2013). *Evolution and medicine*. OUP Oxford.