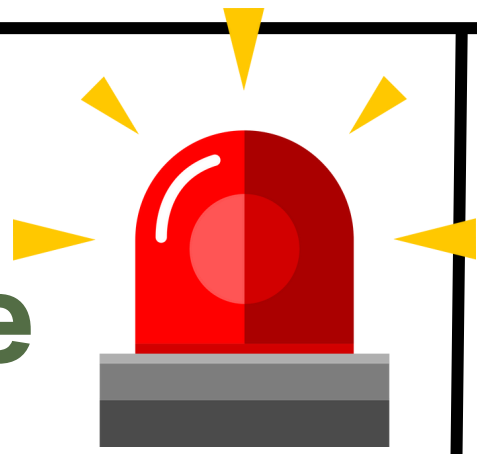


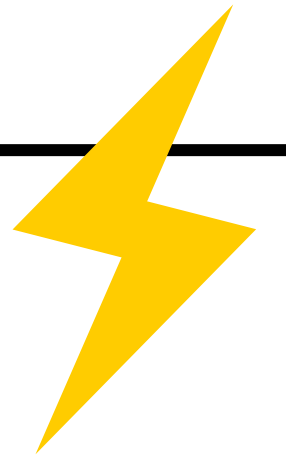
Understanding Anxiety: When the Mind and Body Stay on Alert

Normal response



Anxiety is a normal human response to stress or danger — it helps us stay safe and prepared. But when the alarm system stays switched on too long, it can start to affect every part of life.

The Body's Alarm System

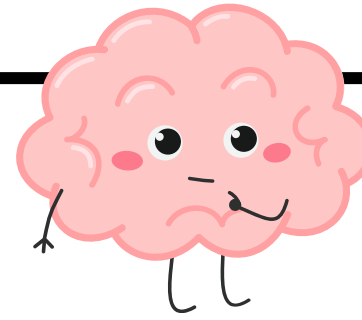


Anxiety activates the fight–flight–freeze response. The body releases adrenaline and cortisol to prepare for danger — even when there isn't one.

Over time, this constant activation can cause:

- Muscle tension, headaches, jaw pain
- Racing heart, dizziness, breathlessness
- Stomach discomfort, nausea, digestive problems
- Trouble sleeping or feeling constantly “wired”

Coping strategies



When anxiety feels unbearable, the mind and body naturally look for ways to escape or control it:

Avoidance – staying away from feared situations or feelings.

Over-control – perfectionism, planning, or overthinking to feel safe.

Substances or Addictive Behaviours – using alcohol, drugs, food, or work to calm or numb anxiety.

Reassurance-seeking – repeatedly checking, asking, or googling for relief.

Numbing or Distraction – scrolling, zoning out, or keeping busy to avoid discomfort.

The Mind

Anxiety makes the mind **hypervigilant**, always scanning for what could go wrong. Common thinking patterns include:

- “What if...?” worst-case scenarios
- Overthinking, mental checking, reassurance-seeking
- Difficulty concentrating or remembering things
- Feeling detached, “foggy,” or out of control

Relationships

Anxiety can make you feel irritable, restless, or tearful. You might feel disconnected from others or worry excessively about what people think. Relationships can become strained by reassurance-seeking or withdrawal.



Perception of the World



The world can begin to feel unsafe or unpredictable. Everyday tasks may feel overwhelming or exhausting. You may start to avoid people, places, or activities that trigger anxious feelings.

Physical Health



Living in a constant state of alert (fight–flight) exhausts the body. Over time, this can lead to chronic pain, muscle tension, headaches, and digestive problems.