



Managing Anxiety - Information Sheet for adults and teenagers

Anxiety is a common and recurring theme amongst people with dyspraxia /DCD – a Dyspraxia Foundation survey in 2014 found that 40% of people with dyspraxia/DCD aged 13-19 years felt anxious ‘all the time’. Anxiety is the term we use to describe feelings of unease, fear or worry. It is a normal response to a frightening or unknown situation such as attending a job interview or preparing for exams. Feelings of anxiety can range from feeling slightly nervous to something completely debilitating unless it is recognised and managed appropriately.

It is important to know that anxiety is a common issue and there is likely to be someone else that you know, or who you study or work with that also has issues.

We will all act and react differently to stressful situations but we hope that some of the following tips will be of use.

Eat a healthy diet

- Avoid stimulants such as coffee, cigarettes and energy drinks as these disrupt your sleep and make your heart beat faster, making it harder for you to control your anxious feelings.

Find peace

- Listening to music, going for a swim, a walk in the fresh air, yoga, Tai chi, mindfulness...whatever works for you.

Exercise

- Regular exercise can really help to boost your mood and help you to deal with your unwanted feelings. Find a physical activity that raises your heart rate and makes you breath faster and that you enjoy. Make the time to do this activity several times a week.
- More information about ‘getting active for mental wellbeing’ can be found here: <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/mental-benefits-of-exercise.aspx>

Sleep well

- A good night’s sleep is important for our mental health and well-being. A podcast explaining how you can get better sleep can be found here: <http://www.nhs.uk/Video/Pages/sleep-problems-podcast.aspx>

Know the triggers

- Keeping a diary may help you to establish common things which trigger your anxious feelings. You can then begin to deal with them or avoid them. Write down when you have managed something successfully and underline it to remind yourself that you CAN do it.
- People with dyspraxia/DCD often worry about things that might happen. One way to deal with this is to think about the worst thing that might happen – if the worst case scenario isn't really so bad then you can decide it's not worth worrying about. Another strategy is to plan a script to help you make decisions and respond appropriately in situations that you find stressful, for example answering the phone, asking for help at a train station and starting a conversation.

Distract yourself

- When you begin to feel anxious try doing something like watch a TV programme, mow the lawn or draw or write something. Take your mind away from your anxious thoughts.

Don't manage on your own

- We all feel anxious at times and it is good to share your feelings with someone who may well understand and be able to help you.
- Talk to a trusted friend or family member or colleague and tell them how you feel. Sharing can be a relief in itself.

Prioritize yourself

- It's important to recognise that sometimes you need to take time out to focus on your own well-being. This might mean withdrawing temporarily from social media if it makes you feel overwhelmed and drained. Don't withdraw from all 'real life' social contact however, as being with people who understand you can help.

Join a support group

- There are some links to useful organisations at the bottom of the page or consider a group affiliated to the Dyspraxia Foundation where you can meet people who can make you feel less alone with your difficulties.

Talk to your GP

- It's OK to admit that everything is not OK. Your GP will be able to offer treatments such as talking therapies or refer you to a specialist.

Accept your anxiety

- Know that your anxiety will pass. It will come and go. Don't let it define you.

People & organisations that can help

www.mind.org.uk - For advice and support re all mental health issues (including anxiety)

www.anxietyuk.org.uk/ - Lots of excellent information, advice and support available here.

<http://www.mindful.org/mindfulness-practice/mindfulness-the-basics> - Lots of us think about trying mindfulness meditation, but it can be hard to know where to begin. This site will show you how to start, feel better, reduce your stress, and enjoy your life a little more.

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cognitive-behavioural-therapy/pages/introduction.aspx> - For information RE CBT (Cognitive behavioural therapy.)

<http://thinkoutsideofthecardboardbox.blogspot.co.uk/2014/01/dyspraxia-anxiety-and-me.html> - a blog in which the author describes how anxiety affects her and the strategies she uses to manage these feelings

Further information available from:

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