

# Get rid of anxiety

Poor sleeping, teeth grinding, inability to concentrate, low pain threshold, poor memory, panic attacks, sweating, increased awareness of danger can all be symptoms of stress and anxiety.

For some people this can be a temporary state due to some passing external factor like a looming deadline, physical illness or family problem. For others it seems to them to be permanently how they are. Chronic anxiety.

Yet there is a substantial and growing body of evidence that suggests that most anxiety is learnt behaviour. There is no anxiety gene, but there are patterns of thinking and behaviour that lead to feelings of anxiety.

The child who is constantly warned to be careful, look where they are going, watch out for this that and the other, is more likely over time to become anxious about life than one who is nurtured in a more empowering way.

Thankfully, patterns that can be weaved can also be undone. Thoughts and behaviours can be relearnt.

One of the first questions I ask people when they come to me with an anxiety condition is “How do you do anxiety?” Not why are you anxious, but how do you do it? Most people look a bit blank at this stage wondering what I mean. The reason for the question is that anxiety and stress creation is not something that happens to us, it is a process – it is something we do in ourselves. We imagine this; we remember that; we tell ourselves unhelpful things in our minds; we get feelings which we interpret as anxiety. And we all do it in our own special way. Hence the question “How do you do anxiety?”

If every time you closed your eyes you imagined a plane falling out of the sky you might be anxious about flying -right? If you made a big picture in your head of yourself standing speechless and dried up at that next presentation, you might well feel anxious about presenting mightn't you? The man who suddenly becomes sexually limp in bed, is the man who probably has just imagined that very thing happening. How anxious is he going to feel next time? Very.

Once you know how you do anxiety you can begin to change it – sometimes quickly. Seeing the plane in your minds eye flying safely to its destination is a much more relaxing thought to have. Looking forward to wowing that audience feels good too. And remembering all those times when things went well in bed and imagining it happening again – well, say no more.

There is so much that you can do that will help you move from feeling powerless to powerful, from having not being able to cope, to being in control. You just have to learn how. And you can.