



vita
health group

What is GAD?

Name:

Date:



What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is what we feel when we are worried, tense, or afraid – particularly about things that are about to happen, or which we think could happen in the future.

Anxiety is a natural human response when we feel that we are under threat. It can be experienced through our thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations.

Anxiety can become a mental health problem if it impacts your ability to live your life as fully as you want to.

How common is Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD)?

1 in 6 people report experiencing a common mental health problem (like anxiety and depression) in any given week in England.

MIND

GAD is a common condition, estimated to affect up to 5% of the UK population.

NHS England

What is GAD?

“

GAD is “characterised by excessive and inappropriate worrying and not restricted to particular circumstances.”

Worry seems to tip into GAD when it becomes frequent and uncontrollable. Those with GAD also have more trouble “controlling, stopping, and preventing” their worries.

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Healthline

What is Worry?

Worry is a **behaviour**, it's something that we do.

When we worry, we often predict something bad will happen or something will go wrong. Although this may be possible, we often **overestimate the danger** and **underestimate our ability to cope** with it.

Worry usually consists of many “What if...?” thoughts. We might find our thoughts are very future-based, and we are worried about situations we feel uncertain about. We will worry about something if we are trying to solve something which has no clear answer, it is out of our control, or if we procrastinate acting on the solution.

Worry is normal but becomes problematic if someone has been excessively worrying, more days than not, for at least six months.

The physical impact of worry

There are many different physical symptoms that might accompany anxiety. Below are listed some of the common symptoms along with our understanding of why our body produces these symptoms.

Put a tick next to the symptoms that you experience or write down some of your own.

Common anxiety symptoms

- Heart racing
- Breathing difficulties
- Light-headed
- Feeling faint
- Feeling hot or cold
- Sweating
- Poor concentration & memory
- Feeling sick/nauseous
- Butterflies in your stomach
- Dry mouth or throat
- Lack of appetite
- Tightness or pressure in the chest
- Shaking or trembling
- Weakness (especially in the legs)

Your other physical symptoms

Blank area for writing down other physical symptoms.



Why does this happen?

When we are worrying about something our body undergoes a physiological response in order to help us prepare to handle the perceived threat or danger.

This is called the “**fight or flight response**”

Our bodies produce the hormone **ADRENALINE** which causes some of the symptoms we experience.

This causes physical symptoms which can be uncomfortable and distressing.

This response evolved to help us fight or flee dangerous physical threats, however nowadays we do not have as many physical threats - we have more psychological threats. It can also cause symptoms such as worry, as it is the brain’s method of highlighting a danger and ensuring you remember it.

What can we do to help ourselves?



What have you tried before?



If no, why do you think this was?



Did it help?



Have you heard of something that others have tried?



If yes, why was it helpful?

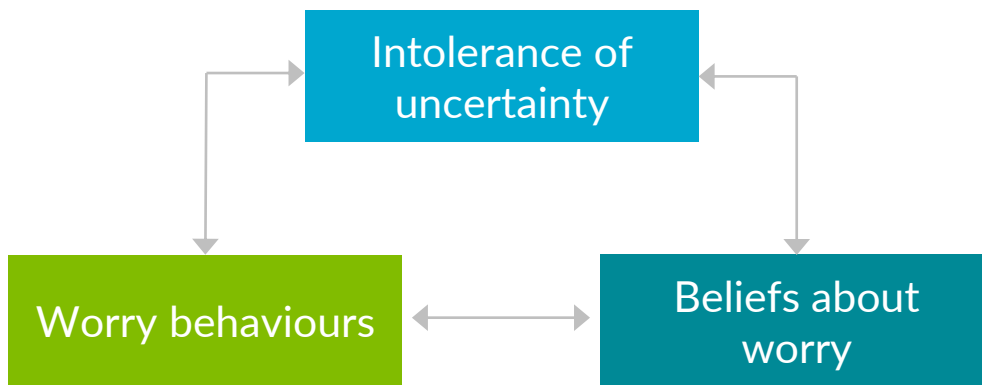
What maintains worry?

Worrying is maintained by a combination of things. We overestimate that future events will be negative, and we feel that we won't be able to cope if the worst did happen.

We believe that worrying about potential problems in the future might help us generate solutions, which makes us worry more. We engage in worry behaviours, such as over-preparing or seeking reassurance, list making or procrastination.

We then experience relief as we think we have done all we can to cope with things 'if the worst happens'.

We believe we have increased the certainty around future events. Experiencing such relief strengthens the use of our worry behaviours and we don't get the opportunity to see what might happen if we didn't worry in the first place.



Intolerance of uncertainty

Uncertainty is unavoidable, and we can't be 100% sure of what will happen next or in the future. People vary in their ability to tolerate uncertainty and those who experience a lot of worry tend to have a low tolerance for uncertainty. It makes them feel stressed, anxious or even panicky, and they feel they need to avoid uncertainty. They may say things like "I need to be 100% sure" and "I can't cope not knowing". They may also find it difficult to make decisions because they aren't certain of the outcome.



People who worry and have intolerance of uncertainty often try to avoid the feeling of distress by using strategies to reduce or even try to eliminate uncertainty. These are worry behaviours.

When we engage in these, we feel we have done everything we can to cope and sometimes feel a sense of relief. We feel we have increased our certainty and life is more predictable. We feel we have gained some control by worrying. But is this really the case?

Examples of worry behaviours:



Over-preparing



Double checking things



Excessive reassurance seeking from others



Excessive list making



Procrastination/avoidance



Distraction



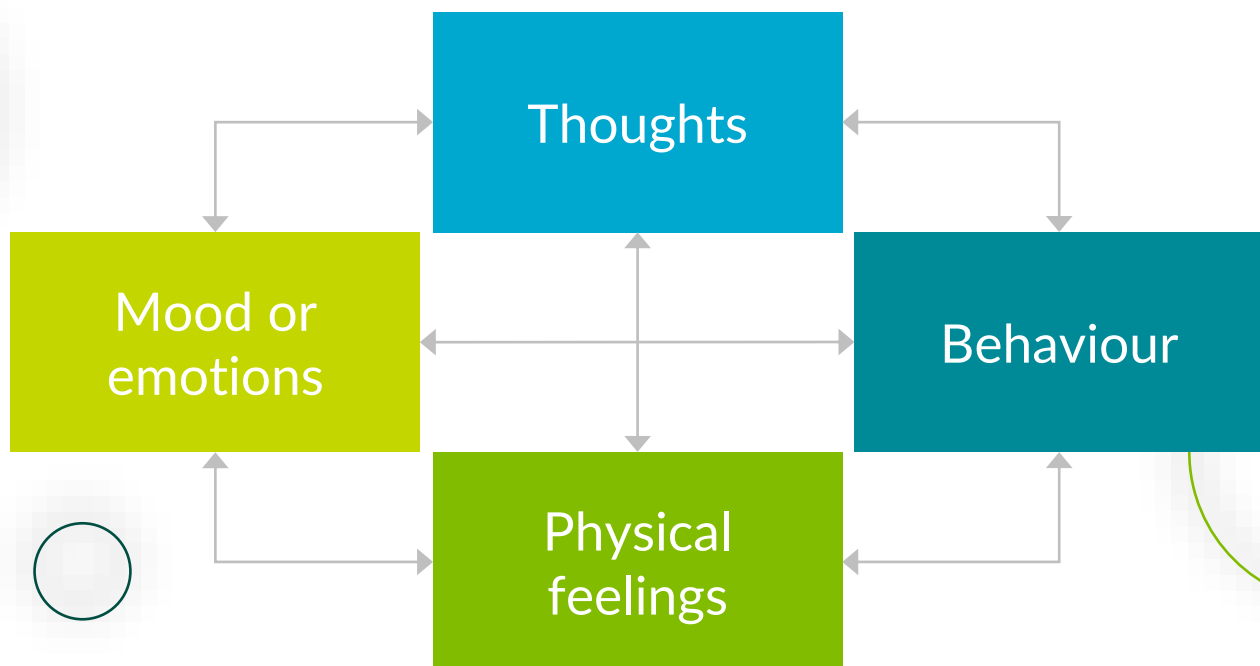
Refusing to delegate tasks to others







Suppressing worries

What are your worry behaviours?

The Cognitive Behavioural Model (CBT)



Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) focuses on present maintenance cycles to understand our difficulties. CBT looks at what physical symptoms, behaviours, thoughts and emotions we experience, and how each of these areas impact each other:

-  **Thoughts** are often negative and exaggerated (e.g. worst case scenario, self critical)
-  **Behaviours** are our attempts to cope with a situation (e.g. avoidance)
-  **Physical sensations** are how our body reacts to our problem (e.g. tension, tiredness)
-  **Mood or emotions** are how we feel (e.g. low, angry, scared, or embarrassed)

When we understand this, we can see that by changing one of these to be more helpful or positive, the others will change too. CBT uses evidence-based techniques to help us make positive changes to break out of these cycles and improve our wellbeing.

Throughout your sessions, we will help to introduce specific tools and techniques which you can use to help manage your mood and anxiety. You will be expected to practise these techniques and review these each week. This will enable you to become your own therapist.

Vicious Cycle of GAD

Thoughts

“What if... happens”
 “I’m prepared for everything”
 “I can’t cope”
 “My mind just won’t stop”

Emotions

Anxiety
 Nervousness
 Apprehension
 Worried
 Scared

Behaviours

Worry
 Reassurance seeking
 Putting things off
 Over preparing
 Avoidance
 Snap at people

Physical feelings

Tense, restless
 Difficulty concentrating
 Nauseous
 Unable to sleep

Your Vicious Cycle

