



Donabate CC Guidance Newsletter

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Coping with Anxiety

Feeling anxious is a natural occurrence for all of us. Anxiety is a sign something needs your attention.



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What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a sign something needs our attention. It can be protective, letting us know there may be danger or something is risky.

It can also be a *positive* thing. Feeling anxious about something like an exam can be a motivator to study and practice. But sometimes, feelings of anxiety can become overwhelming and interfere with our daily lives.

Anxiety is something we all feel. It is an experience that we have and not a part of who we are.

People often describe sensing something is 'off' or feeling uneasy, or are worried that something bad might happen. These are just some examples. Everyone is different and can experience anxiety in different ways.

While these body sensations are uncomfortable **they are not dangerous** and can be managed.

Something to try...

Deep breathing exercise



There are effective ways to manage the physical effects of anxiety. One of these is deep breathing.

Recognise when the physical signs of anxiety arise, and remind yourself that while they feel uncomfortable, they are not dangerous.

Then practice deep breathing. If your mind or heart is racing this will help to slow things down. Take a deep breath in and hold it for four beats. Then exhale slowly for four. It sounds simple but can bring you into the moment and calm your body down.

Practice this when you're not feeling anxious to increase the chances of you remembering to do it when you need it. [Reach Out Australia](#) created a simple app that uses visuals to help you slow your breathing called, appropriately, [Breathe](#).

Negative Thinking Patterns

When we're feeling very anxious, we may start to view things as problems, or problems waiting to happen. The more we look for potential problems the more we see them.

The truth is we never really know what will happen or anyone else is thinking. The unfortunate reality is, if we look for problems we will find them.

Recognise your negative thinking patterns and try to talk to yourself with some compassion.

Stop and check, are you giving yourself a hard time?

Try to be kind to yourself and talk to yourself in a supportive way, as you would to others.



What triggers anxiety is often a build up of different things over time, so it's very rarely just one thing



- Vanessa, Jigsaw Clinician

How you can manage anxiety

Acceptance

We can reduce the impact anxiety has on us if we can accept that some discomfort is natural, and even necessary, in our lives.

If we start learning and listening to the signals that anxiety brings us, it can help us take action. Sometimes getting anxious is an opportunity to work through the feelings of discomfort and learning to be OK with it.



If we look at anxiety as a way to bring our attention to something, then it gives an opportunity to assess what it is that's causing us to feel like this.

Ask yourself:

- **What is this about?**
- **Is it because it is all new?**
- **Is it something you can overcome?**

Try not to develop a habit of avoidance

When we're getting anxious a lot, it's only natural that we start to do things, or avoid doing things, so that these feelings won't come. It can seem like an obvious solution and may work in the short term but can easily become a habit of avoidance.

This then prevents us from feeling free in our life. It interferes with us being able to be who we want to be and do what we want to do. It also prevents us from learning to face discomfort when we need to, and to overcome anxiety.

Being OK with anxiety

There are situations in our lives that will cause us to feel discomfort. Times of transition, such as starting a new school, or job, going to college or moving out of home are just some examples.

It's perfectly natural that we feel anxious at these times and it can be good to remember most people would feel the same. Often, we don't recognise this though, because of our own worry.

Something to try...

Ladder lists

If we've been avoiding things because the thought of them causes us discomfort, a good way of approaching them is making a list.

Think of the items on the list as if they were each a step on a ladder. Put the most difficult task at the top with the easiest task at the bottom.

Then, starting at the bottom, take on the tasks *one at a time*. That way you can stretch yourself a little bit each time to get something done. Reward and thank yourself when you manage to get something done. If you're having difficulty with a task, try breaking it into smaller tasks.

When you are comfortable doing one task then you can look ahead. It shouldn't be far to get to the next step on the ladder.



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The following websites have up to date and relevant mental health support should you need it:

www.pietahouse.ie

www.jigsaw.ie

www.mentalhealthireland.ie

Remember to reach out to your One Good Adult if you're feeling overwhelmed.

If you need us, please email us. We're always here.

Alice Chaloner

Kerrie Whelan

[READ MORE ABOUT WHAT'S GOING ON IN DCC ON OUR SCHOOL'S FACEBOOK PAGE](#)



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