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Event

Member Webinar

Managing Anxiety



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About Me

Passionate about supporting individuals become more effective, fulfilled, happier and healthier in their personal and professional life.

Mental Health Day

This day is part of a global initiative led by the World Federation for Mental Health (WFMH), which marks its 75th anniversary in 2024.

This year's theme is

“It is Time to Prioritise Mental Health in the Workplace.”

This theme underscores the importance of fostering Mental well-being in professional settings, acknowledging the significant impact that work-related stress and mental health issues can have on employees.



Webinar Session

Outline

- What is anxiety
- Symptoms
- Types of anxiety
- Causes
- Coping strategies
- Your action plan
- Helpful resources

What Is Anxiety?

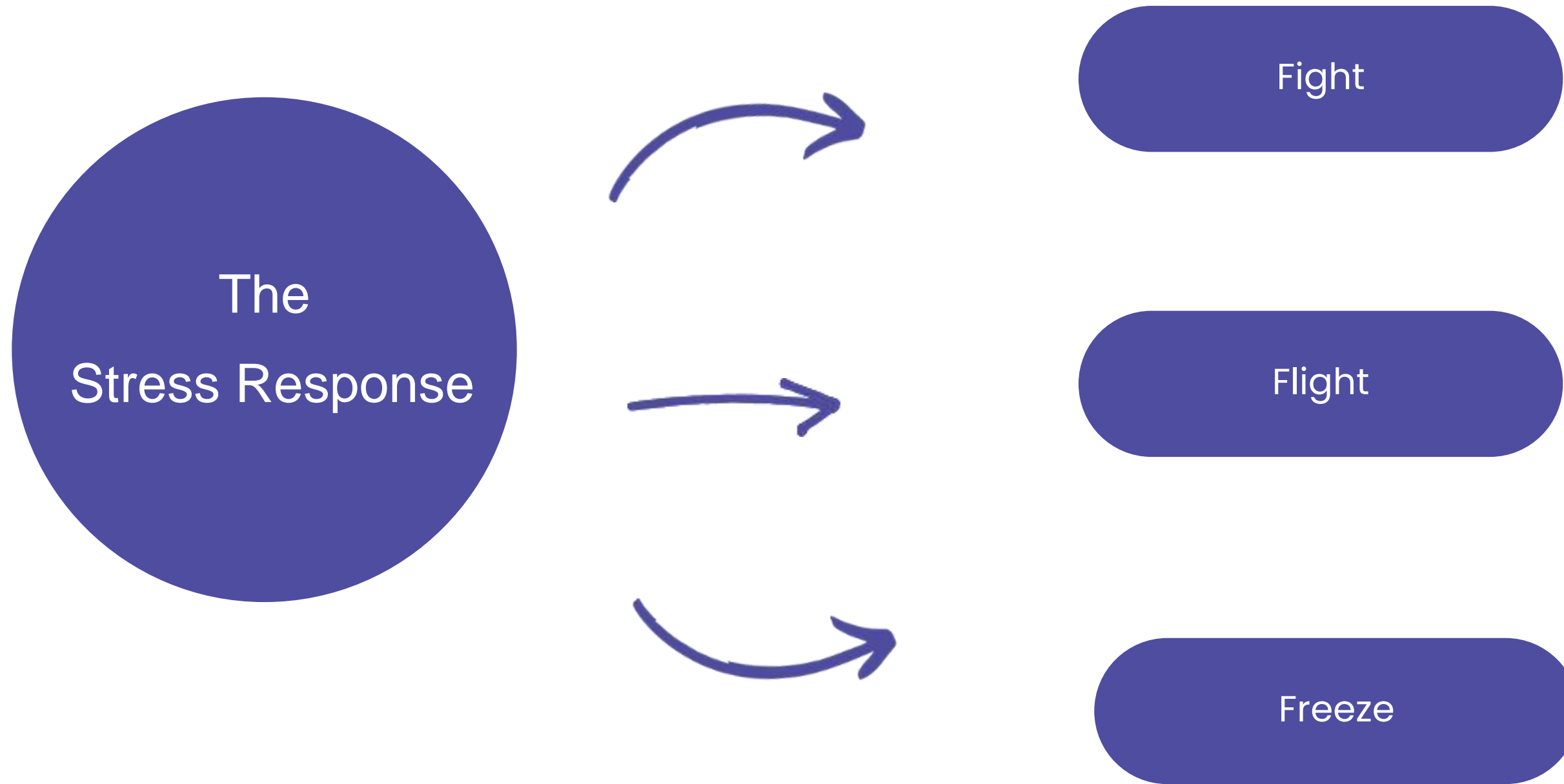
Anxiety is defined as an emotional state that involves feelings of tension, worried thoughts, and physical changes such as increased blood pressure. It is a normal and often adaptive response to stress, allowing individuals to prepare for or avoid perceived threats.

While anxiety can be beneficial in certain situations, it can become maladaptive and lead to significant distress and impairment if it is excessive or persistent.

American Psychiatric Association (APA). (2013).

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*





Symptoms Of Anxiety

Psychological Symptoms

Excessive Worry

Persistent worry about everyday issues. The worry is often disproportionate to the actual situation.

Restlessness

A sense of being “on edge” or unable to relax, often feeling restless or fidgety.

Difficulty Concentrating

Trouble focusing or finding that your mind goes blank during tasks.

Irritability

Increased irritability and frustration, often over minor issues.

Fear or Panic

Intense feelings of fear or panic, which can escalate to panic attacks

Avoidance Behaviour

Avoiding situations, places, or people that trigger anxiety.

Negative Thinking Patterns

A tendency to think negatively about oneself and the past or future.
Catastrophising—believing the worst possible outcome will occur.

Physical Symptoms

Increased Heart Rate (Palpitations)

A rapid heartbeat, which can feel like your heart is racing or pounding.

Shortness of Breath

Feeling like you can't catch your breath or experiencing tightness in the chest.

Sweating

Excessive sweating even in non-stressful situations or while resting.

Muscle Tension

Persistent tension in the muscles, often in the neck, shoulders, and back.
Can lead to headaches or chronic pain.

Fatigue

Feeling easily fatigued or drained of energy, even after sufficient rest.

Nausea or Gastrointestinal Issues

Feelings of nausea, stomach aches, or digestive issues.

Dizziness or Light headedness

Feeling faint or dizzy.

Sleep Disturbances

Trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, or experiencing restless and unrefreshing sleep.

Types Of Anxiety

Anxiety can be categorised into two main types

Normal Anxiety

A temporary response to stress, which can motivate individuals to take action, such as studying for an exam or preparing for a job interview.

Pathological Anxiety

Refers to anxiety that is excessive, persistent, and out of proportion to the situation, often leading to anxiety disorders.

Anxiety disorders are among the most common mental health conditions worldwide.



Anxiety Episode

An anxiety episode refers to a **temporary, short-term experience** of anxiety, which is usually a response to a specific situation, stressor, or trigger.

It is characterised by **acute symptoms of anxiety**, include rapid heartbeat, sweating, trembling, shortness of breath, and racing thoughts, feelings of fear, worry, or other physiological reactions. Importantly, symptoms subside once the trigger is removed or the situation is over.

Anxiety episodes can be triggered by specific stressors like an upcoming deadline, public speaking, or conflict at work. They are **situational**, meaning they occur in response to a particular context or trigger.



Anxiety

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Anxiety Disorder

Anxiety Disorders

An anxiety disorder is a chronic mental health condition characterised by **persistent**, excessive worry or fear that is disproportionate to the actual threat. Anxiety disorders affect daily functioning and often require professional intervention.

The anxiety is pervasive, lasting for at least six months, with symptoms present most of the time. This distinguishes it from an episodic response, which is temporary.

Anxiety disorders can result from a combination of genetic, biological, psychological, and environmental factors. Unlike episodes, these disorders are not always linked to specific triggers and can occur without a clear reason.



Aspect	Anxiety Episode	Anxiety Disorder
Duration	Brief (minutes to hours/days)	Long-term (minimum of 6 months, often chronic)
Triggers	Triggered by a specific, identifiable stressor	Can occur without clear triggers, often generalized
Impact on Functioning	Usually limited, situational impact	Significant impact on daily life and overall functioning
Frequency	Occasional	Persistent, frequent episodes or continuous anxiety
Treatment	Coping techniques may be sufficient	Requires professional intervention (therapy, medication)
Nature of Anxiety	Acute, linked to specific situations	Generalized or specific, but persistent and debilitating
Physical Symptoms	Symptoms subside quickly	Symptoms are prolonged and often interfere with life
References	NIMH, 2021	APA DSM-5, 2013

Common Anxiety Disorders

Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD)

Characterised by persistent, excessive worry about various aspects of everyday life, such as health, work, social interactions, and daily routines.

The anxiety is often difficult to control and can interfere with daily functioning.

Symptoms

Restlessness, fatigue, concentration problems, muscle tension and sleep disturbances.



Common Anxiety Disorders

Panic Disorder

Involves recurrent, unexpected panic attacks—sudden periods of intense fear or discomfort accompanied by physical symptom.

People often fear they are losing control, having a heart attack, or "going crazy."

Individuals often develop a fear of future attacks, which can lead to avoidance behaviours.

Symptoms

Accelerated heart rate, palpitations, perspiring, trembling, chest pain, dizziness, and fear of dying.



Common Anxiety Disorders

Social Anxiety Disorder (Social Phobia)

Social Anxiety Disorder is characterised by an intense fear of social situations where one might be exposed to scrutiny by others. The fear is often centered around being embarrassed or judged.

Fear of social interactions, avoidance of social events, blushing, sweating, and nausea in social settings. This disorder can significantly impair social and occupational functioning.



Common Anxiety Disorders

Separation Anxiety Disorder

Although often diagnosed in children, adults can also have separation anxiety. It is characterised by excessive fear or anxiety concerning separation from home or from those to whom the individual is attached.

Symptoms

Excessive distress when anticipating or experiencing separation, fear of losing attachment figures, nightmares about separation.



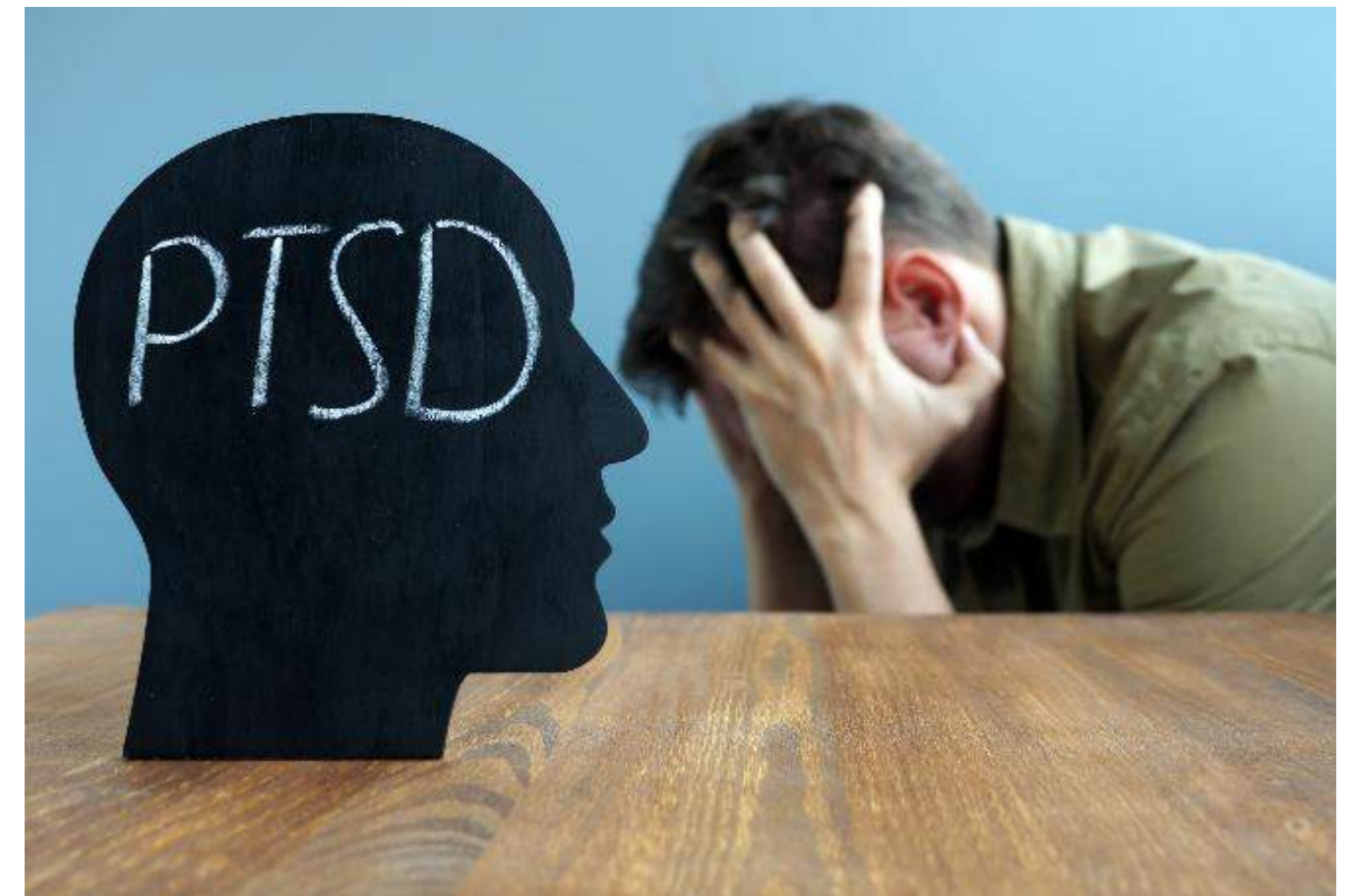
Common Anxiety Disorders

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

PTSD can develop after exposure to a traumatic event, such as natural disasters, accidents, war, or assault.

Symptoms

Flashbacks, nightmares, severe anxiety, avoidance behaviours, and hypervigilance.



Common Anxiety Disorders

Health Anxiety

Individuals with health anxiety have excessive worry about having a serious illness, often despite medical evidence to the contrary.

This type of anxiety is sometimes classified under somatic symptom and related disorders.

Symptoms

Frequent body checks, excessive health-related research, and repeated reassurance-seeking from doctors.

Different from GAD due to the health-specific nature of anxiety.



Common Anxiety Disorders

Substance/Medication-Induced Anxiety Disorder

This is directly caused by substance use or withdrawal from substances like alcohol, caffeine, or drugs.

Symptoms

Anxiety symptoms occur during or shortly after substance use or withdrawal, including panic attacks, generalised anxiety, or obsessive-compulsive symptoms.



Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

OCD is characterised by intrusive, unwanted thoughts (obsessions) and/or repetitive behaviours (compulsions) performed in an attempt to reduce anxiety caused by these thoughts.

Symptoms

Repetitive behaviours (e.g., checking, cleaning), intrusive thoughts that are difficult to dismiss, and anxiety if rituals are not completed.

Common themes include contamination fears, symmetry and harmful thoughts.



Phobias

Specific Phobias

Specific phobias involve an irrational fear of a specific object or situation. The fear is disproportionate to the actual danger posed and often results in avoidance.

Symptoms

Immediate anxiety upon exposure, avoidance of the phobic stimulus, and physical symptoms like sweating or trembling.

Common Types

Animal phobias (e.g., spiders), natural environment (e.g., storms), blood-injection-injury, situational (e.g., elevators) flying, heights.



Phobias

Agoraphobia

This involves a fear of being in situations where escape might be difficult or where help would not be available if things go wrong. It often includes a fear of open spaces, crowded areas, or using public transport.

Symptoms

Avoidance of situations like traveling in buses or being in large crowds.

Link with Panic Disorder

Often, agoraphobia is associated with panic disorder, as people may develop the fear of having a panic attack in certain situations.



Where Does Anxiety Come From?

Causes Of Anxiety

Anxiety is a prevalent issue among professionals in Ireland,
with various factors contributing to heightened levels of anxiety
in the workplace

Work-related Stressors

Job Demands

Lack of Control

Workplace Culture

Poor Support Systems

Lack resources and training

Personal factors

Family responsibilities

Perfectionism



Causes Of Anxiety

Genetic Factors

Individuals with a family history of anxiety or other mental health Disorders are at a higher risk of developing anxiety themselves.

Neurochemical Imbalance

An imbalance in key neurotransmitters such as serotonin, norepinephrine, and gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA) plays a role in anxiety. Low levels of serotonin are particularly linked with increased anxiety.

Brain Function

Regions of the brain involved in fear and emotion regulation, such as the amygdala, are hyperactive in individuals with anxiety disorders. This overactivity can lead to an exaggerated fear response.



Causes Of Anxiety

Environmental Factors

Exposure to traumatic events, such as physical or emotional abuse, the death of a loved one, or accidents, can trigger anxiety.

Childhood Experiences

Early adverse experiences like neglect, bullying, or witnessing domestic violence can increase vulnerability to anxiety later in life. These experiences can disrupt normal emotional development, making it difficult for individuals to regulate stress.

Chronic Stress

Long-term stress from work, relationships, or financial problems can also contribute to anxiety.

Ongoing stress elevates cortisol levels, which can impact brain areas that regulate mood and anxiety.



Causes Of Anxiety

Thought patterns

Overestimating danger or underestimating one's ability to cope, contribute significantly to anxiety disorders. This is a core component of disorders like Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD).

Certain personality traits, such as neuroticism, shyness, or introversion, may predispose individuals to anxiety. Individuals who are prone to perfectionism or have a high need for control may also be more susceptible to anxiety.



Causes Of Anxiety

Medical Factors

Anxiety can sometimes be linked to underlying medical conditions, such as hyperthyroidism, heart disease, or chronic respiratory disorders.

Some medications can trigger anxiety as a side effect, such as corticosteroids, asthma inhalers, and thyroid medications.

Learned Behaviour

Children can develop anxiety by observing anxious behaviour in parents or other significant figures.



Causes Of Anxiety

Substance Use

Substance abuse can lead to anxiety or worsen pre-existing anxiety disorders.

Excessive caffeine consumption has also been linked to increased anxiety, as it can elevate heart rate and promote a physiological state that mimics anxiety symptoms.



Coping Strategies For Anxiety

Coping Strategies

Diaphragmatic breathing

Involves taking slow, deep breaths from the diaphragm reduces the body's "fight or flight" response and activates the parasympathetic nervous system, which promotes relaxation.

Box Breathing (Square Breathing)

Inhale for 4 counts, hold your breath for 4 counts, exhale for 4 counts, and hold again for 4 counts. This cycle is repeated several times. Helps regulate breath, which reduces anxiety symptoms by lowering heart rate and blood pressure.

Practice the 4-7-8 Breathing Technique

Inhale through your nose for 4 counts, hold for 7 counts, and exhale through your mouth for 8 counts. This is repeated for 3-4 cycles. encourages the body's natural relaxation response and is effective for acute anxiety.



Coping Strategies

The 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Technique

This method uses the five senses to help ground you in the present and are effective in reducing acute anxiety by re-engaging the rational part of the brain .

Identify

- 5 things you can see,
- 4 things you can touch,
- 3 things you can hear,
- 2 things you can smell, and
- 1 thing you can taste.

They all help divert attention from anxious thoughts by focusing
On physical sensations, thereby calming the mind.



Coping Strategies

Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)

Involves tensing and then slowly releasing each muscle group in the body, starting from the feet and working up to the head.

PMR helps counteract the physical symptoms of anxiety and can lead to an immediate sense of calm.



Coping Strategies

Cold Water Immersion

Splashing cold water on your face or placing your wrists under cold running water for 30–60 seconds can have a calming effect. Cold exposure triggers the mammalian diving reflex, which reduces heart rate and shifts the body's focus away from anxiety symptoms.

Mindfulness Meditation

This involves paying attention to the present moment non judgmentally, often by focusing on the breath or bodily sensations. A few minutes can lower anxiety by reducing rumination and calming the nervous system.



Coping Strategies

Visualisation Technique (Guided Imagery)

Close your eyes and visualise a place where you feel safe, calm, and happy. Focus on the details of that environment—what you see, hear, and feel.

Positive Affirmations

Repeat calming and reassuring statements, such as "I am safe" or "This feeling will pass," to replace anxious thoughts.

Repeating positive affirmations helps rewire the brain to reduce the tendency for negative, anxious thinking.



Coping Strategies

Aromatherapy

Inhaling the scent of lavender oil can help calm anxiety symptoms.

Lavender has natural sedative properties that help reduce the physiological symptoms of anxiety.



Therapies

CBT is the most widely studied and commonly recommended psychological therapy for anxiety disorders.

It is a time limited therapy helps individuals identify, challenge, and replace unhelpful thoughts with more balanced and constructive thinking.

It has been shown to be highly effective for generalised anxiety disorder (GAD), panic disorder, social anxiety disorder, and phobias. It typically involves a combination of cognitive restructuring and exposure exercises.

CBT is widely available through the HSE and private practitioners. Online CBT is also offered through platforms like SilverCloud Health.



Therapies

Exposure Therapy

This is particularly effective for specific phobias, panic disorder, and social anxiety. It involves gradual exposure to the feared object or situation in a safe environment, helping reduce the fear response over time.

For specific phobias, exposure therapy is considered the most effective form of treatment. It is often integrated as a component of CBT and can be accessed through trained therapists in Ireland, both in public services and private practice.



Therapies

EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing)

This is a structured therapeutic approach originally developed to help individuals process traumatic memories, but it has also proven effective in treating anxiety.

EMDR can be particularly helpful for anxiety that stems from distressing experiences or unresolved emotions.



Therapies

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)

This combines mindfulness with behaviour change strategies, encouraging individuals to accept their thoughts and feelings rather than trying to eliminate them.

It has been shown to be effective in treating a wide range of anxiety disorders, especially for those who struggle with overcontrol or avoidance behaviours.

The key components are mindfulness, acceptance, and commitment to action.



Therapies

Pharmacotherapy

Medication, such as Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs), is often used in combination with psychological therapies for anxiety. Medications can help manage symptoms, making it easier for individuals to engage in therapeutic work.

They are effective for many anxiety disorders, including GAD, panic disorder, and social anxiety disorder.



Lifestyle Supports

Regular exercise, good sleep hygiene, mindfulness practices, and other self-care strategies can be beneficial.



Practical Daily Tips

Tip n° 01

Identify Anxiety Triggers & Effective Coping Strategies

Tip no° 02

Time & Priority Management

Tip n° 03

Setting Healthy Boundaries

Tip n° 04

Anxiety/Stress Management
App/Resource Support

Tip n° 05

Create A Self Care Routine

Self Assessment



Anxiety
Ireland

<https://www.anxietyireland.ie/test/anxiety-quiz/>

Personal Action Plan

Anxiety Triggers	Symptoms	Coping Strategy

Supports In Ireland

HSE Mental Health Services

The HSE provides access to various evidence-based therapies, including CBT and pharmacotherapy, through community mental health teams and primary care centers.

Aware

Provides support for those experiencing anxiety and depression through a variety of therapies, including CBT and group support programs.

MyMind

Offers affordable therapy services, including CBT, EMDR, and ACT, across Ireland.

Anxiety Ireland

Provides resources and information specific to anxiety, including coping strategies, blog posts, and contact details for support.



Supports In Ireland

Turn2Me

Offers free online counselling and support groups for those dealing with anxiety, depression, and stress.

Online Resources and Information

Mental Health Ireland

Offers information and resources on mental health conditions, including anxiety also have various programs focused on mental well-being and stress management.



**Mental Health
Ireland**

GROW Mental Health Recovery

Provides peer support groups across Ireland for individuals dealing with anxiety and other mental health issues, encouraging positive mental health and well-being.

Supports In Ireland

Helplines and Counselling Services

Samaritans Ireland

Website: www.samaritans.org/ireland

Helpline: 116 123 (available 24/7)

Offers emotional support for anyone experiencing distress or struggling to cope

Pieta House

Website: www.pieta.ie

Helpline: 1800 247 247 or Text HELP to 51444

Provides support for people dealing with suicidal ideation or engaging in self-harm, including free counselling services.



Supports In Ireland

Shine

offers support groups and services for people affected by mental health conditions, including family members, with programs that address anxiety and stress management.

Apps and Digital Tools

SilverCloud (HSE-supported)

Website: www.silvercloudhealth.com/ie

This digital mental health platform offers a suite of online programs for anxiety, depression, and stress, funded and accessible for HSE users. It uses Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) to help manage symptoms.



Podcasts

Where is My Mind?

Niall Breslin, (Bressie), is one of Ireland's leading mental health advocates. His podcast explores mental health, mindfulness, and how we can better take care of our minds in the chaos of modern life. He often talks about his own experiences with anxiety and brings in experts and guests who provide insights into coping mechanisms and mental well-being.

The Therapy Room with Audrey Byrne

Audrey Byrne, an accredited psychotherapist, addresses various mental health topics, including anxiety, self-care, and coping strategies. She provides practical advice and insights from a professional perspective, making complex issues more approachable for listeners.

Owning It: The Anxiety Podcast

Caroline Foran, author of the best-selling book *Owning It: Your Bullsh*t-Free Guide to Living with Anxiety*, hosts this podcast aimed specifically at tackling anxiety. She shares her personal experiences, offers practical tips, and interviews experts in mental health to provide tools and strategies to manage anxiety.

Podcasts

The Blindboy Podcast

Blindboy Boatclub, of the Rubberbandits fame, uses his platform to talk openly about mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, and social pressure. His approach combines humour, storytelling, and deep discussions on psychology and well-being, making complex topics more accessible.

Mental Wealth Podcast - Hosted by Mental Wealth Ireland

Focused on destigmatising mental health discussions and promoting a culture of openness. Episodes feature mental health advocates, professionals, and people sharing their experiences with anxiety and other mental health issues.

Podcasts

The Two Norries Podcast

Hosted by James Leonard and Timmy Long, who are both in recovery from addiction, "The Two Norries" discusses mental health, trauma, and the intersection with addiction and anxiety. Their honest conversations about their own mental health struggles resonate deeply with listeners, offering hope and practical guidance.

Mind Yourself Podcast

Declan Treanor, a psychotherapist, hosts this podcast that provides tips and insights into managing mental health and anxiety. Episodes are typically short and focus on actionable strategies, making them perfect for professionals who want quick and effective advice.

Let's Talk About Mental Health

This podcast explores different aspects of mental health, including coping with anxiety, in an open and accessible manner. The hosts often have guest speakers, including mental health professionals and individuals sharing their own experiences with anxiety, offering listeners multiple perspectives.

Podcasts

Not Another Anxiety Show

Kelli Walker's podcast includes episodes recorded in Ireland and is hugely relatable to an Irish audience. It focuses on anxiety education and provides practical techniques for managing anxiety symptoms. The approach is compassionate and informative.

Happy Habit Podcast

Focuses on positive habits for mental well-being. Matthew covers a wide range of topics, including anxiety, and discusses practical daily habits that help improve mental health. He explores evidence-based approaches, blending his discussions with positive psychology insights.

Educational Programmes & Workshops

Stress Control Online (HSE)

The HSE offers free "Stress Control" classes online.

These workshops are evidence-based and help participants learn techniques to control stress and anxiety.

Aware Life Skills Programme

Aware provides free CBT-based programs designed to help individuals learn tools for managing anxiety and depression. The Life Skills Programme is available both online and in local community settings.



Personal Action Plan

01

What are your top takeaways from this webinar?

02

What will you start doing today to support yourself?

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QUESTIONS & ANSWERS?

Ask Away.

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