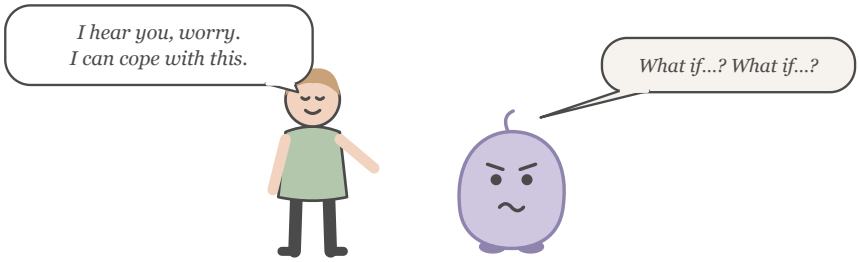
–LENSS–

Understanding and Calming Anxiety

Making sense of anxiety and finding steadier ground.

Anxiety is your body's alarm system. It evolved to protect you by getting you ready to fight, run or freeze. The trouble is that the alarm can go off for things that feel threatening but aren't dangerous: a meeting, an unanswered message, the thought of being judged. Anxiety is uncomfortable, but it is not harmful, and it is not a sign of weakness.

This worksheet brings together ideas you may have met in your sessions: the iceberg, the anxiety cycle, thinking traps, the Goldilocks zone, and ways to soothe and settle.

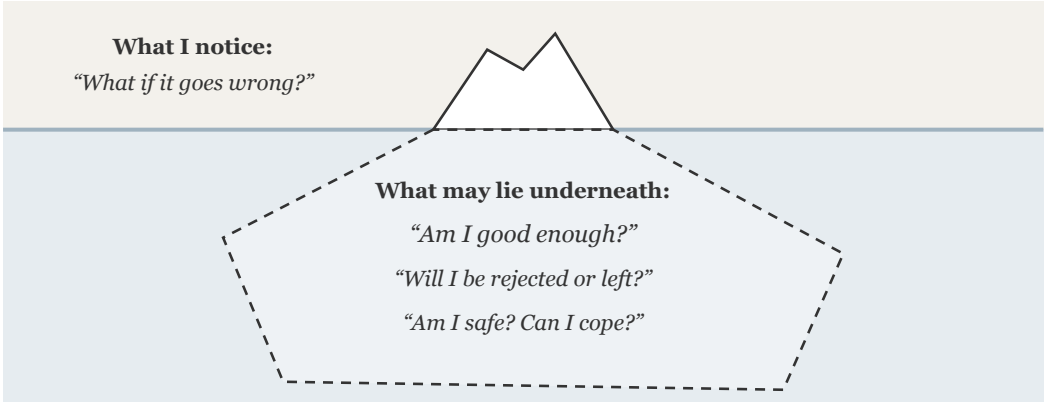


Anxiety can come along with me, but it doesn't get to steer.

The question underneath: the iceberg

The worry we notice is often just the tip of the iceberg. Underneath, there is usually a quieter, deeper question.

- Write down a worry exactly as it shows up in your head.
- Ask: "And if that were true, what would it mean about me?" Keep asking until you reach something that feels more about you than about the situation.
- What did you find underneath? Where else in your life does this deeper fear show up?



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My anxiety signs

How does anxiety show up for you?

In my body	In my thoughts	In what I do

The anxiety cycle and safety behaviours

When anxiety rises, we reach for ways to feel safe: avoiding, checking, over-preparing, seeking reassurance, people-pleasing. They bring quick relief, but the anxiety comes back stronger, because we never get to learn that we can cope.

- Which safety behaviours do I use most?
- What do they cost me (time, energy, confidence, relationships)?
- Which one could I hold off on, just once, this week? What do I predict will happen, and what actually happens?



Thoughts are not facts

Anxious thinking falls into familiar traps. Spotting them takes away some of their power.

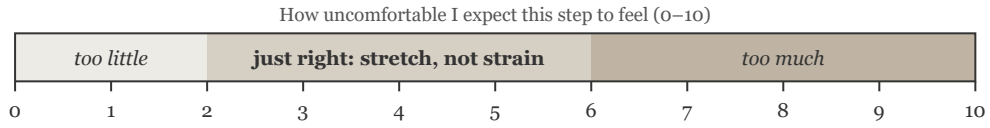
- **Mind-reading:** "They think I'm useless." **Fortune-telling:** "It's going to go badly."
- **Catastrophising:** "If this goes wrong, everything will fall apart." **All-or-nothing:** "If it's not perfect, it's a failure."
- **Reframing:** look at the same situation from a fairer, more balanced angle. Ask: What would I say to a friend? What is the most likely outcome, not the worst? What have I coped with before?

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Anxious thought	Thinking trap	A more balanced reframe

The Goldilocks zone of change

Too little change makes no difference. Too much creates anxiety and can leave you not wanting to try again. Just enough feels a little uncomfortable, but manageable, and that is where change happens.



A step I could take (smallest first)	Discomfort I expect (0–10)	What happened

Being with anxiety: Name, Notice, Soften, Step

Imagine anxiety as a visitor in the waiting room of your mind. You don't have to invite it into every conversation, or throw it out. You can let it sit there while you carry on with your day.

1. **Name it:** "I'm having the thought that…"
2. **Notice it:** where does it live in your body? Describe it like a curious observer.
3. **Soften around it:** breathe slowly into that area and give the feeling a little more room.
4. **Take a step:** ask "What would I do now if I weren't waiting for the anxiety to go?" Then do it.

Soothing and calming

A soothing narrative is a kind, steady story you tell yourself when anxiety rises: acknowledge what's happening, make sense of it, remember what helps, and offer a kind next step.

- **Longer out-breath:** in for 4, out for 6 to 8, for two or three minutes.



- **Grounding 5-4-3-2-1:** 5 things you can see, 4 you can feel, 3 you can hear, 2 you can smell, 1 you can taste.
- **Muscle relaxation:** tense one part of your body for 5 seconds, then let go for 10.
- **Safe place:** picture somewhere calm and notice it with all your senses.
- **Worry time:** set aside 15 minutes a day for worries, and save other worries for then.

My soothing narrative:

My plan for when anxiety rises

Anxiety level	What I notice	What I'll do
Settled (0–3)		Keep my daily routine and calming practice going
Rising (4–6)		
High (7–10)		

> If anxiety feels unmanageable most days, or you ever feel unsafe, please talk to your therapist or GP. For urgent help, call NHS 111. In an emergency, call 999.

"Anxiety is not a sign that something is wrong with you."
"It is a sign that a part of you is trying to protect you."
"With understanding and small, steady steps,"
"you can find calmer ground."