

MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

Mental Health & Wellbeing

> **Mental Health & Wellbeing Strategy**

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Anxiety

Anxiety is the most common mental health condition in Australia. On average, one in four people will experience anxiety at some stage in their life. It is important to note that people experience different symptoms of anxiety persistently or throughout various periods of their life. Remember that you are not alone, anxiety can affect any person, at any stage in their life.

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What is anxiety

Anxiety is a normal part of life, often characterised by an individual's excessive and persistent worry and fear about everyday situations. Individuals may often experience intense feelings of nervousness, fear and worry as well as intrusive thoughts and fatigue when presented with events or activities such as socialising, competence, academic performance and safety.

There are several types of anxiety disorders with generalised anxiety disorder, panic disorder, social anxiety disorder, and various phobia-related disorders being the most common.

Individuals with anxiety may experience the following symptoms:

- Difficulty with task initiation and continuation
- Unable to concentrate
- Feeling restless, wound-up or on edge
- Easily fatigued
- Headaches, muscle-aches, stomach aches or unexpected pains
- Difficulty controlling feelings of fear or worry
- Having difficulties falling or remaining asleep
- Increased irritability
- Avoidance to engage in desired tasks
- Lack of motivation and willingness to participate

If you would like further information regarding anxiety, please check out the following link:

<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/the-facts/anxiety>

If you would like to speak to a health professional about feelings of anxiety and how to best manage your experiences, please reach out to your GP to seek further advice. Your GP will be able

to discuss your concerns and make the appropriate referrals (psychologists, psychiatrist, counsellors, etc.), if needed.

Strategies to manage anxiety

There are a range of strategies you can try to manage your anxiety. It can take time to find the strategies that work best for you. But remember, if your anxiety is proving difficult to manage seek support from a health professional.

- **Slow breathing:** When experiencing feelings of anxiety, your speed and depth of breath often becomes quicker and shallower. Practice deliberately slowing down your breath and focus on the rate that you inhale and exhale. You could slowly inhale four seconds, hold for 2, exhale slowly for six seconds, continue to repeat this until you feel calm.
- **Progressive muscle relaxation:** Using progressive muscle relaxation such as making a fist with your hand or raising your eyebrows as high as they go can be helpful in cases where anxiety is associated with muscle tension. This information sheet will guide you through forms of relaxations <https://Progressive-Muscle-Relaxation.pdf>
- **Remaining present:** Individual's often experience anxiety regarding events in the mere future, it is important to remain present and stop intrusive thoughts from impacting your space. You may practice meditation, to bring yourself back to the present moment and relish in your positive experience.
- **Maintaining a healthy lifestyle:** Remaining active, maintaining a healthy diet, spending time outdoors and actively engaging with family and friends are all activities that contribute to a healthy lifestyle and promote balance in an individual's life, whether this balance be from work or study. Regular exercise can provide relief from uncomfortable physical symptoms of anxiety and naturally increase self-esteem and a sense of wellbeing. Eating foods that are rich in complex carbohydrates, proteins and fruits also contribute to overall health and wellbeing, aiding in the relief of anxiety symptoms.
- **Practice overcoming challenges and taking small acts of bravery:** Anxiety can often make individual's avoid tasks which can provide temporary relief in the moment, however this strategy does not provide a long-term solution. Challenge yourself to overcome challenges by taking small acts of bravery to engage in an activity that makes you anxious (an example: going to the grocery shops alone), develop a plan and look at the facts for and against your intrusive thoughts being true. Whether the task be big or small, individual's experience a sense of fulfilment

and achievement when they have learnt that their fear was not likely to happen, and if it was to happen, they have developed the skills to cope with it.

- **Get to know your anxiety:** Keep a diary or journal and make entries throughout the day to track your levels of anxiety in response to different events. Through doing this, you can get to know your anxiety and patterns to then better plan your day to avoid disruptions and to allow for instances where you may worry.
- **Be kind to yourself:** Remember that you are not alone and your anxiety does not define you. Take time to be present, with yourself and acknowledge the positive contributions that you make everyday, whether it be as simple as getting out of bed or having a glass of water.

Anxiety and my studies

When preparing for exams or managing your studies at university, consider these tips and apply the strategies that work for you, one at a time - don't overwhelm yourself.

- **Prepare:** Avoid cramming all of your study and revision the day before a test or due date for an assignment. Take your time to plan and prepare for tests and assignments, ask questions to your tutor and peers to know your material well.
- **Don't over study:** Know your material well, but take regular breaks as needed.
- **Slow down:** Practice breathing and mindfulness techniques to decrease your heart rate and in turn, increase your attention and focus to the task.
- **Limit distractions:** Be aware of your space and position yourself in a study location where you can focus (e.g. book a study room at the university library).
- **One thing at a time:** Focus on one question at a time, do not allow your brain to wonder off or begin working on the next question before you finish the first one.
- **Be patient:** Be patient with yourself, if you can not answer the first question or solve the first problem to your work, move on to a task that you can complete and come back to it later.
- **Don't watch the clock:** Take your time, work at a steady and productive pace.

University Support

WSU resources:

If your anxiety is creating barriers that may affect your study or you want support to optimise your study then the WSU [Counselling Service](#), [Disability Service](#), or [Student Welfare Service](#) may be able to help.

- **WSU [Counselling Service](#).**

Students can access free, short term, confidential counselling services. Face to face, Zoom or telephone appointments can be made by telephoning 1300 668 370 or sending an email to counselling@westernsydney.edu.au. Our office hours are Monday to Friday 9.00am - 4:30 pm.

- **WSU [Disability Service](#).**

The Disability Service is free to access with Disability Advisors assisting students to meet their full potential. If you have a diagnosed physical, psychological or medical condition that impacts on your studies, you may be eligible for an [Academic Integration Plan \(AIP\)](#), developed by the Disability Service. Contact the Disability Service on 1300 668 370, email disability@westernsydney.edu.au or make contact via [WesternNow](#).

- **WSU [Welfare Service](#).**

Academic, Personal and Financial Hardship, International Support and Accommodation: 1300 668 370 or via [WesternNow](#).

- **Multifaith [Chaplaincy](#)**

Multifaith Chaplaincy can provide confidential conversation and care, support for stress

management and anxiety with links to religious groups and faith communities. For more information, please call Daniel Jantos on 0402771543 or email d.jantos@westernsydney.edu.au.

- **WesternLife**

[WesternLife](#) - Join thousands of students at Your Virtual Community to share experiences, learn new things, connect with new friends, and engage with events or discussions that interest you!

- **Disruption to Studies**

Consider applying for [Disruption to Studies](#) and [Requests for Extension](#) if you feel as though your studies have been significantly impacted.

- **Deferred Exam**

[Deferred Exam](#) – You can apply for a Deferred Exam no later than 5.00 pm on the second working day after your scheduled exam if you are unable to attend a final exam due to serious illness, misadventure or other exceptional circumstances beyond your control. Submit a [Student Form](#) and attach supporting documents online for application.

- **Withdraw Without Academic Penalty**

[Withdrawal Without Academic Penalty](#) is an option available after the Census Date of the teaching term provided that you meet eligibility.

- **Leave of Absence**

A [Leave of Absence](#) is a temporary break from studying. Once you have completed one or more subjects in your enrolled program, you can apply for a Leave of Absence. A Leave of Absence can be taken as either six or twelve months. The maximum amount of leave you can take during your program is twelve months. Please note, you must submit your application before the relevant census date

If you are considering any of these options, please reach out to the counselling service for support and guidance. If you are an international student, please make sure you seek advice particularly if you are considering withdrawing without penalty or taking a leave of absence as these may have [implications for your visa conditions](#).

Community Support

Community resources:

- **Lifeline.**

Lifeline (24 hours crisis counselling) - **13 11 14**

Lifeline SMS Counselling Service - between 6pm- Midnight you can text **0477 13 11 14** and somebody will text you back! You can find more information [here](#).

- **Mental Health Telephone Access Line**

[Mental Health Telephone Access Line](#) - 1800 011 511

This Mental Health Line is staffed by mental health professionals that can help and provide you advice about your needs and discuss referrals to local mental health services. It is available to everyone in NSW and operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

- **Grounding techniques**

Visit this website for quick grounding techniques when anxiety hits <https://www.confidentlife.com.au/5-quick-ways-to-ground-yourself-when-anxiety-hits/>

- **How to Cope With Panic Attacks – The School of Life**

The School of Life has a couple of videos on anxiety. Here is a video on how to cope with panic attacks. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lbJv4AiDatg>

- **Beyond Blue**

Visit the beyond blue website for strategies to manage your anxiety. <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/the-facts/anxiety/treatments-for-anxiety/anxiety-management-strategies>

Here is a link to a variety of discussion forums where you can read, share, and learn from

people who understand what you're going through. <https://forums.beyondblue.org.au>

- **Mental Health Online**

An internet based treatment clinic for people with anxiety and comprises three main areas: information, clinical assessment and treatment programs. <https://www.mentalhealthonline.org.au>

- **Black dog institute**

[Black Dog Institute](#) provides information on understanding anxiety and the signs & symptoms. They also provided a range of help resources.

- **Reach out**

[Reach Out](#) provides tips and strategies to help with stress and anxiety.

Resources

- [Podcasts](#)
- [Videos](#)
- [Apps](#)

Podcasts

'Owning It: The Anxiety Podcast'

Owning It: The Anxiety Podcast explores everything from what anxiety is, why it happens to us, how our brains work and why it's actually very normal. This podcast will provide you with various tools and techniques necessary for owning your anxiety.

<https://podcasts.apple.com/au/podcast/owning-it-the-anxiety-podcast/id1449728710>

<https://open.spotify.com/show/5UsxoX6ikTr3ETvzQAHbdP>

'How to Overcome Anxiety – The Mindset Mentor'

This podcast episode by The Mindset Mentor aims to teach you a simple technique to work past your anxious thoughts.

<https://podcasts.apple.com/au/podcast/how-to-overcome-anxiety/id1033048640?i=1000547183005>

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/3MNTN6o7Z0e720uuSvZmcO>

'5 Ways to Kill Your Anxiety – The Mindset Mentor'

This podcast episode by The Mindset Mentor shares 5 strategies to guide you through your anxious thoughts.

<https://podcasts.apple.com/ie/podcast/5-ways-to-kill-your-anxiety/id1033048640?i=1000484598132>

https://open.spotify.com/episode/5V485e3aQgKfNhQR6eaCb5?si=3r5t8osMQx6yxF_Rv2GRWg

Videos

What's normal anxiety -- and what's an anxiety disorder? | Body Stuff with Dr. Jen Gunter



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xsEJ6GeAGb0>

How to cope with anxiety | Olivia Remes | TEDxUHasselt



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WWloIAQpMcQ>

Apps

- **[Talk Campus](#)**: There is a 24/7 support app called TalkCampus, which is free and available to download on iOS devices (App Store) and android devices (Google Play). WSU students can connect and talk with other students about anything.
- **[Smiling Mind](#)**: Smiling Mind offers a free app to help you practice your daily meditation and mindfulness exercises from any device. Smiling Mind can be used to boost mental wellbeing. You can easily download on any iOS device (App store) and android (Google play).
- **[Headspace](#)**: Learn to manage feelings and thoughts with the lifelong skill of everyday mindfulness, any time of the day.
- **[My Compass](#)**: myCompass is a free app that is available to download on iOS devices (App store) and android (Google play). It is a self-help program developed by the Black Dog Institute. It has proven to relieve symptoms in people experiencing mild-to-moderate anxiety and depression.
- **[Headgear](#)**: Headgear is a free and easy-to-use smartphone app that is designed to build resilience and wellbeing and prevent anxiety and depression. You can download it on iOS (App store) and android (Google play).
- **[Mindshift](#)**: Mindshift (CBT App) is a free app that is available for iOS (App store) and Android (Google play). The app uses techniques to help reframe your anxious thoughts. It helps reduce worry, stress, and panic by following evidence-based strategies.
- **[iBreathe](#)**: iBreathe app is free access and is available on all iOS devices (App store) and can be installed on your apple watch and iMessage to send to your friends. iBreathe helps you guide through deep breathing exercises and is simple and easy-to-use.

Still struggling?

Anxiety can be very challenging. Asking for help is an important step in managing this condition and realising your full potential!

If you are still struggling, reach out to the WSU counselling team for support and advice. If you prefer to seek support from a service outside of the university, it may be helpful to speak to your General Practitioner regarding a [Mental Health Care Plan](#) and referral to a psychologist, or you can speak to a counsellor or other health professional. Remember you are not alone and there will always be someone out there who is willing to stay with you through your hard times.

Please find the attached PDF document [here](#).

References:

[Beyond Blue - Anxiety](#)

[Beyond Blue – Anxiety Management Strategies](#)

[Health Direct - Anxiety](#)

[Australian Bureau of Statistics – National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing](#)

[American Psychological Association - Anxiety](#)

[National Institute of Mental Health – Anxiety Disorders](#)

[Tips and Strategies to Manage](#)