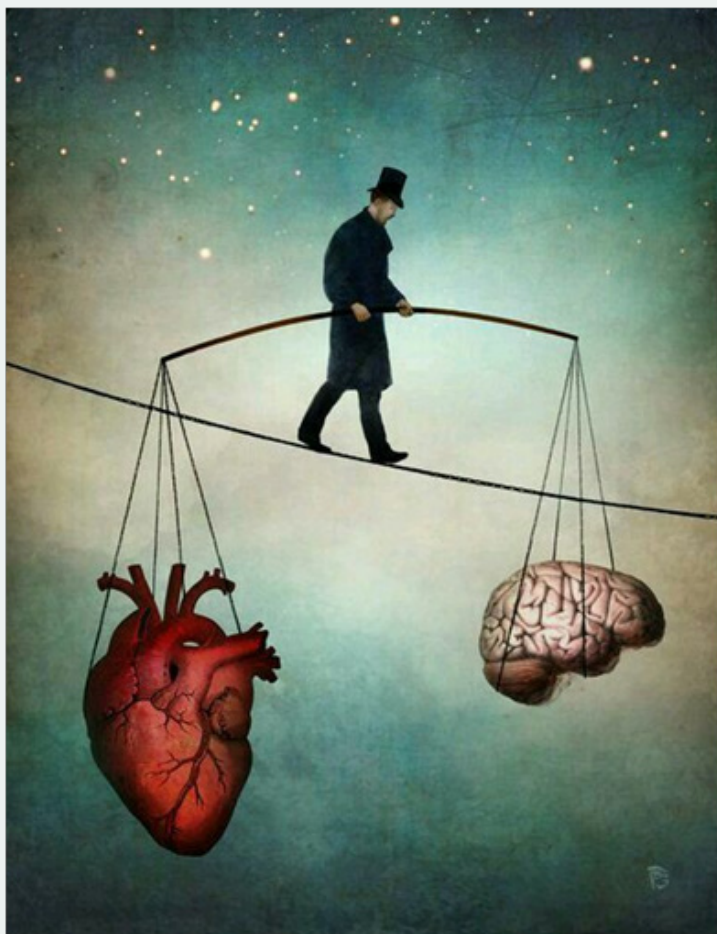


Information and Tools to help with Anxiety

- Tools to help cope with feelings of anxiety
- Information to better understand anxiety
- Some cognitive behavioural strategies you can use according to your needs
- Resources for support



**Pointe-Saint-Charles
Community Clinic**

A neighbourhood's health and solidarity!

Contents

***There is no right or wrong order in which to read this booklet.
If you are feeling significant anxiety, skip directly to the tools section.***

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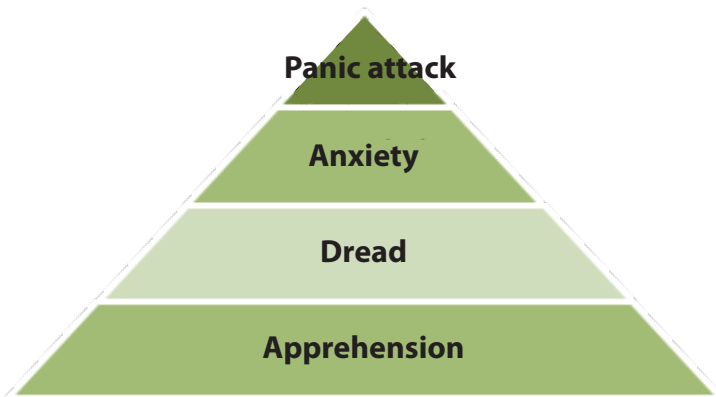
What is Anxiety?

Sometimes it can be difficult to sift through our emotions and put a finger on exactly what we are experiencing. Here are two definitions that may be helpful in this regard.

Fear	Anxiety
<p>"[...] reaction of alarm in the face of immediate danger."</p> 	<p>"[...] is oriented towards the future, characterised by apprehension because we cannot predict what will happen to us."</p> 

(Barlow and Durand, 2016)

There are different levels:

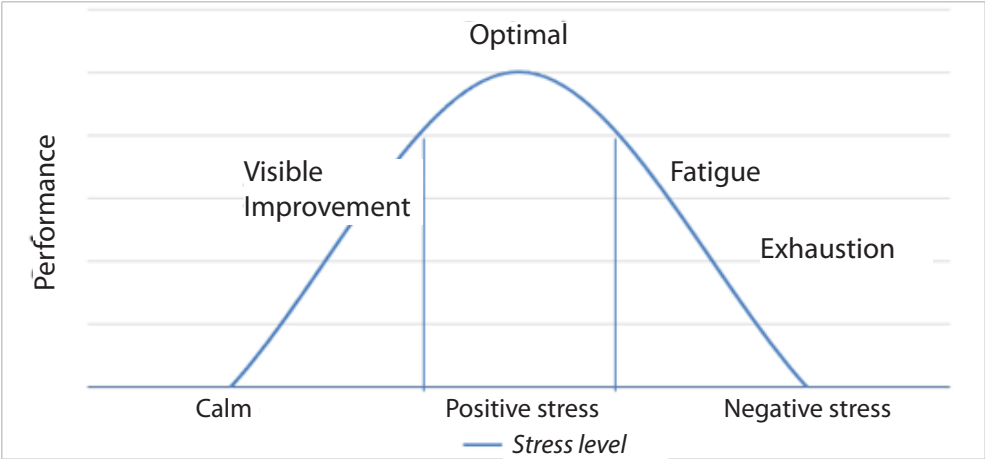


It can range from a brief discomfort, taking a mild form (not interfering in any significant way), to a more serious form, causing significant or continual distress, such as a panic attack *(Bourne and Garano, 2005)*.

Is anxiety necessarily bad for us?

The answer is no. Up to a certain point, it can even be **helpful**.

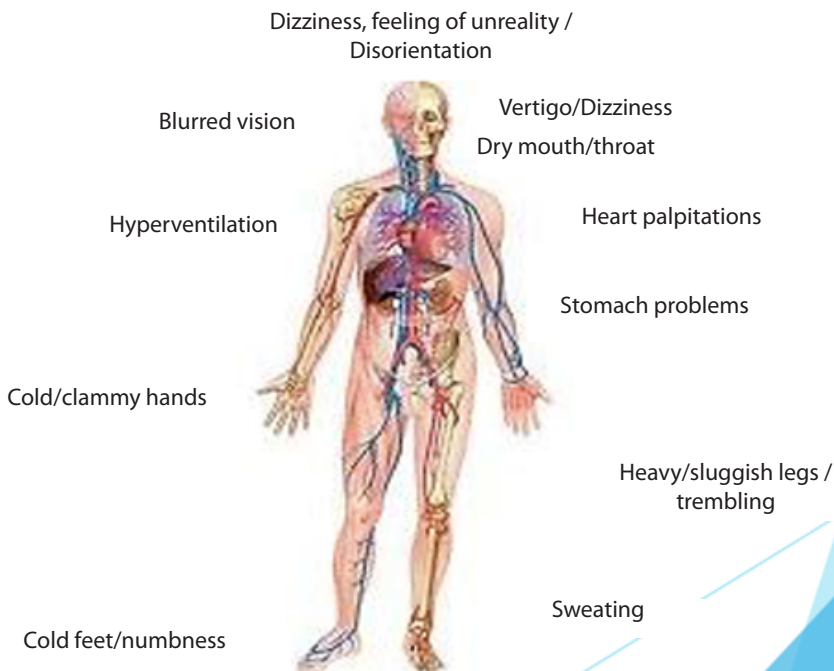
According to the Yerkes-Dodson law, when anxiety is **moderate** individual performance is optimal (positive stress), but it becomes harmful when it gets too high.



Here are some manifestations of anxiety we can identify in ourselves:

Behavioural	Cognitive
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Paralyzing our capacity<ul style="list-style-type: none">- to act;- to express ourselves;- to carry out every day tasks.• Leading us to avoid situations perceived as threatening	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Impact on evaluation of danger or its consequences• Underestimating our abilities• Irrational or catastrophic thinking• Anxious brooding

Physiological reactions



Take the time to **observe yourself and identify** your own reactions. **Circle** those matching your experiences. If you have others, **write** them down:

Practising Self-Management

**What you can do yourself
(recommendations):**

1. Take time to calm down



Muscle relaxation

☐ I already do this ☐ To try out



Video:

- [Youtube: Reducing Stress Through Deep Breathing](#)

Written or audio description, go to:

- Website: www.anxietycanada.com, article: [How to do Progressive Muscle Relaxation](#)
- [Youtube: Cardiac coherence by Philippe Delneufcourt](#)

Application

- Download *The breathing app* (free)



Meditation

☐ I already do this ☐ To try out



Yoga

☐ I already do this ☐ To try out

- [Youtube : Yoga for Anxiety - 20 Minute Practice - Yoga With Adriene](#)



Mindfulness

- You can also try staying in the present (the here and now). **How?**

By using your 5 senses:

- identify 5 objects by a different sense
- identify 3 things you can hear
- or 2 things you can smell

Practising Self-Management

These suggestions are simply examples; there are many other options for each technique. Try them out to discover what works best for you. In an emotional state, it is not always easy to apply these strategies. In the short-term, **you can also try distractions** (listening to music, counting, doing something else).

See p. 11 for other simple strategies you can apply on a daily basis.

Here are some good strategies to use when you can't release the energy your body has stored up:

2. Confront your fears

Adopt an active role towards challenges by using a problem-solving approach (see tool p. 15)



☐ I already do this ☐ To try out

3. Question yourself

Take time to question your thinking using the socratic method (see tool p. 18)



☐ I already do this ☐ To try out

4. Adopt a healthy lifestyle

Even in pandemic times, it is important to maintain a routine and do physical exercise. Consult your doctor if you have a medical condition that could be affected by dietary changes (e.g., hypoglycemia). Here are some tips:

Consumption

Watch your consumption of drugs, alcohol, sugar, energy drinks and coffee. Such products can trigger physiological conditions contributing to anxiety. Especially try to avoid them before sleeping. Chose a healthy and balanced diet.



☐ I already do this ☐ To try out

Practising Self-Management

Sleep

Given that “lack of sleep can be both a cause and effect of anxiety,” it is an important point to consider (Bourne and Garano, 2005). Taking a short walk before going to sleep, doing relaxation and waking up and going to bed at regular times are some simple steps you can take.



☐ I already do this ☐ To try out

Going further :

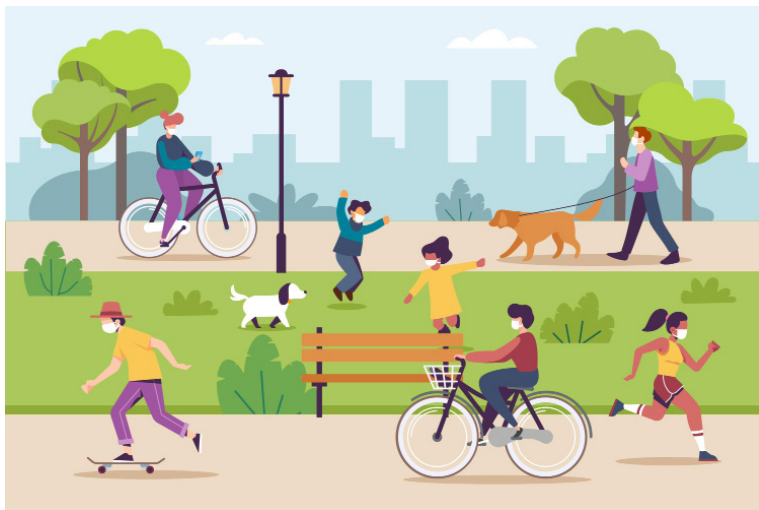
- Book: Silberman, S. A. (2009). The Insomnia Workbook
- Book: Bourne, E. et Garano, L. (2020). Pocket Therapy for Anxiety
- Website: [Stress & Development lab](#), Harvard University

Physical exercise

As noted above, our body mobilizes and accumulates energy which must then be used up. Among other things, when we do physical activity, our body produces dopamine which gives us a feeling of well-being. It is generally a good idea to walk, play a sport or do other physical activity on a regular basis (20 to 30 minutes, 4 to 5 days a week). Consult your doctor if you have fragile health.



☐ I already do this ☐ To try out



To support you in the change

Make an action plan (see p. 19)

and apply one or more of the suggested strategies. It can be useful to make a note of what works and of what is less helpful. This information may be helpful to the person following up with you.

Identify methods, not mentioned here, that you already use and that work well for you:



Use the resources around you

- Ask family members and friends for help.
- Seek support from community organizations:
 - South-west crisis intervention center:
L'Autre Maison: 514-768-7225, open 24/7
 - Helplines: **Tel-Aide**: 514-935-1101, open 24 hours
 - Organisation **Revivre**: 514-738-4873,
open Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm
 - Info Social : 8-1-1, open 24 hours
 - AmiQuébec: 514 486-1448, open Monday to Thursday from
9am to 5pm and Friday from 9am to 4pm.
- Ask a social worker whether the "**Mieux vivre avec son anxiété**" group, run by the Clinic, is available (in French only).
- You can get back in touch with the psychosocial intake if your condition worsens: 514-937-9251 ext. 7500, from 8:30am to 3:30pm.

For more information

- Livre: Harris, R. (2008). The Happiness Trap: How to Stop Struggling and Start Living
- Website: humanstress.ca
- Youtube channel: [Anxiety Canada](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCv8v8v8v8v8v8v8v8v8v8v8)

Tools:

69 Tricks to Reduce Stress

1. Sing a song you like.
2. Careful not to fall into the mental trap of "I want it now!" Computers and microwave ovens produce instantaneous results, but people move more slowly.
3. Buy comfortable, easily maintained clothes that go with other things you have. Avoid labels like "dry clean only."
4. The more expensive something is, the more stress you feel over losing or breaking it.
5. Give yourself time to get used to one major change before attempting another.
6. Never forget that you are not responsible for other people's moods or feelings.
7. Don't use negative labels on yourself; instead of thinking "I am stupid and irresponsible," say to yourself, "I forgot a meeting."
8. Look out the window and "go on a safari." Watch the cats, squirrels, dogs and birds.
9. Take time out to relive a happy moment in your life.
10. Hug your kids and loved ones.
11. Listen to your favourite music.
12. Take a 15-minute break and relax.
13. Go for a long drive on a road you've never taken before.
14. Get together with an upbeat friend who has a good sense of humour and laugh together.
15. Having less is having more. You don't need to own everything you like; you enrich your life simply by being alive.
16. Eliminate caffeine from your diet or reduce it.
17. Think of "failures" as valuable experiences rather than obstacles.
18. Do something kind for someone else.
19. Talk less.
20. Listen more.
21. Do your errands outside rush hour and busy days to avoid crowds and heavy traffic.
22. Each month, buy a ticket for a special event (sports, theatre, etc.) so that you have something to look forward to.
23. Join a charity organization.
24. Enroll in a course.

Tools:

69 Tricks to Reduce Stress

25. Limit your nights out to one or two per week.
26. Jot down your problems on paper and discuss them with a good listener; don't bottle them up.
27. Spread out your meetings, appointments, difficult projects and big changes over the week, month or year, so that you don't have to do everything at the same time.
28. Say no. Learning how to say no to more projects, social activities and invitations for which you know you won't have either the time or the energy requires practice, self-respect and the belief that everyone needs time for rest and solitude, every day.
29. Imagine a fabulous fantasy for yourself and live it for five minutes.
30. Choose leisure and social activities different from your work. If you do manual work, choose leisure activities that engage your mind. If you work with lots of people or with the public, choose a leisure activity you can do alone and vice versa.
31. Hit tennis or golf balls; bat some balloons around.
32. Avoid being with people who put you down.
33. Be open to learning new things and unlearning others.
34. How much is a hassle worth in terms of money? Is contesting a \$30 parking ticket in court worth the high blood pressure, time and irritation it will cost?
35. Watch fish in an aquarium.
36. Take a brisk walk around your neighbourhood.
37. Cry. Scientists have discovered that there are chemicals in emotional tears; crying is a way to get rid of them.
38. Ask yourself what the worst thing that could happen and what you would do if it really did happen. This may help remind you that life goes on even when the worst happens and you will probably be able to pull through just fine.
39. Throughout the day, take time to enjoy yourself and think of yourself. For example, you can ask someone for help doing a difficult task, relax your shoulders, take a walk, change plans, work on something you keep putting off, or take a health-break.
40. Live one day at a time and in the moment.

Tools:

69 Tricks to Reduce Stress

41. To avoid constant brooding over your problems, face them directly. Don't put off until tomorrow what you can fix right away. If you can't change the situation, put it aside and forget about it. If you can do something, do what you can and let go of anxiety. If this doesn't work, ask yourself, "Ten years from now, what difference will this make?"
42. Listen to your favourite music while driving.
43. Remember to bring something to read to reduce stress during long waits (public transport, appointments, line-ups).
44. Ask yourself if what you are about to say is true and necessary.
45. On Friday afternoons (or the last day of your work week), take some time to tidy up your work station. Next Monday morning, you'll be all ready to go.
46. If something gets on your nerves (e.g., there is never a pen near the phone to take messages), instead of continuing to bear with it, find a lasting solution (e.g., attach a pen to the phone).
47. Get up to stretch every once in a while if your work requires you to stay seated for long periods.
48. You are going to be late because you are stuck in traffic. Stop at a phone booth to let the person waiting for you know; this will help you to relax and drive carefully.
49. If you can, save vacation time so you can take several long weekends throughout the year.
50. Give yourself an extra 15 minutes to get to your appointment.
51. Even if you are very busy, take a meal break. Take physical and mental distance from your work space, if only for 15 or 20 minutes.
52. Take your job seriously ... without taking yourself too seriously. Keep inspirational or funny readings handy for moments when you need a quick lift.
53. Leave your work at the office. If you have extra work to do, start earlier or finish later.
54. Think ahead to have contingency solutions on hand in case of need: extra keys to house and car, copies of important documents, change for parking and telephone, etc.

Tools:

69 Tricks to Reduce Stress

55. Do your household chores with the kids; make it into a game and enjoy yourselves.
56. If you don't like a household chore, see if someone else might be able to do it for you sometimes or even on a regular basis.
57. Make music.
58. Pat your pet.
59. Browse through an old photo album you love.
60. Unplug the phone and watch a good film.
61. Put a pillow in front of your mouth and scream loudly.
62. Do some gardening.
63. Change things around in your home (e.g., move a piece of furniture, a picture, a plant).
64. Take steps to eliminate unwanted phone calls.
65. Take a hot bath or a cold shower.
66. Get ready the day before: clothes, meals, things for school or work. Complete the tasks you start. Don't put them off until tomorrow. That way, you will be less rushed.
67. At the end of the day, take a few minutes to go over the day's events and note where you succeeded in reducing stress and where you could have done better.
68. Before sleeping, imagine tomorrow as a successful day without stress. Mentally condition yourself.
69. Finally, don't forget that a good sense of humour can help you get through everyday difficulties more easily.

Adapted from Hope Healt letter, the Hope Heart Institute, Seattle, Washington.



Tools: Problem-Solving Approach



A problem can be viewed as a challenge rather than as a threat.
Problems can be opportunities for growth.

1. **Become aware of the problem or problems** (make a list if necessary)

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____

2. **Establish goals** (clear, realistic, and limited) over what you can control

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____

3. **Think of possible solutions** (spontaneously write down all the solutions that seem good or not so good without immediately analysing them).

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| a) _____ | d) _____ |
| b) _____ | e) _____ |
| c) _____ | f) _____ |

4. Consider the **advantages** and **disadvantages** of the **best possible solutions**.

Solution 1	Advantages	Disadvantages
Short-term		
Medium-term		
Long-term		

Tools: Problem-Solving Approach



Obstacles to overcome : _____

Resources available to help me : _____

Fears or grounds for avoidance which might prevent the goals from being achieved: _____

Solution 2	Advantages	Disadvantages
Short-term		
Medium-term		
Long-term		

Obstacles to overcome : _____

Resources available to help me : _____

Fears or grounds for avoidance which might prevent the goals from being achieved: _____

5. Chose a solution

Tools: Problem-Solving Approach



6. **Decide on a plan of action** (starting with an easy step)

STEPS		TIMELINE
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

7. **Practice with another person** (role play) or imagine how that person might act in your situation.

8. **Take action and assess the results.**



Tools: The Socratic Method



A) What evidence is there for or against this idea?

Questions to verify the accuracy of an assertion:

1. Is it really true?
2. What evidence do you have to say that? Are you really sure?
3. What were you obliged to do?
4. Did things really happen like that?
5. Is there a law stating that?
6. Are your sources of information accurate?
7. Are you replacing probabilities with certainties?

B) Is it possible to see things otherwise?

8. Could there be other explanations?
9. What would someone else do in your place?
10. Can other solutions be imagined?
11. What you are saying is a valid hypothesis. Are there others?
12. Putting yourself in your boss' shoes, what might his point of view be? What would you say to your best friend if you knew he was thinking that?
13. What would your best friend say if he knew you were thinking that?

C) If this happens, what will the consequences be?

14. In the worst-case scenario, what will happen?
15. Let's say you made a mistake, is it so terrible?
16. Will you still be happy?
17. Will your future be compromised forever?
18. Supposing it is a failure, will there only be negatives to the situation?
19. Are there ways of adapting to the situation?
20. How can you cope?

I take action



We suggest that you take it step by step with 1 or 2 strategies. For each strategy, think about how you will implement it **realistically**.

The resource directory (gettingbettermyway.ca) presents many suggestions that may be useful to you.

You can ask someone you know or an organization such as Revivre (revivre.org/en) to help you plan your strategies.

Feel free to show this tool to your doctor, psychologist or other health care provider. He or she can help you in this process.

I choose my strategies on _____ (date)

Strategy	Description What actions? Where? When?	Helpful resources E.g. family members, friends, community organization, doctor, etc.
<p>E.g. I play sports or engage in physical activity:</p>  	<p>E.g. I will go for a 15-minute walk, 3 times a week.</p>  	<p>E.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My friend • My dog • A walking group 