

Performing Positively: Managing exam anxiety

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EMOTIONS
NOT TO BE KEPT
BOTTLED UP INSIDE



Welcome & Introductions



What is exam anxiety?



Feelings of nervousness, worry, fear, or apprehension before or during exams or other evaluative situations.

It is a common experience and can vary in intensity from mild to severe.

Exam anxiety can negatively impact academic performance, as well as overall well-being and quality of life in the build up to assessments and results

Anxiety is functional and meant to drive behaviour....



What triggers it?

- Fear of failure,
- perfectionism,
- pressure to perform well,
- lack of preparation,
- negative experiences with exams,
- high expectations from oneself or others.
- low self-confidence, poor time management skills, or ineffective study habits can contribute





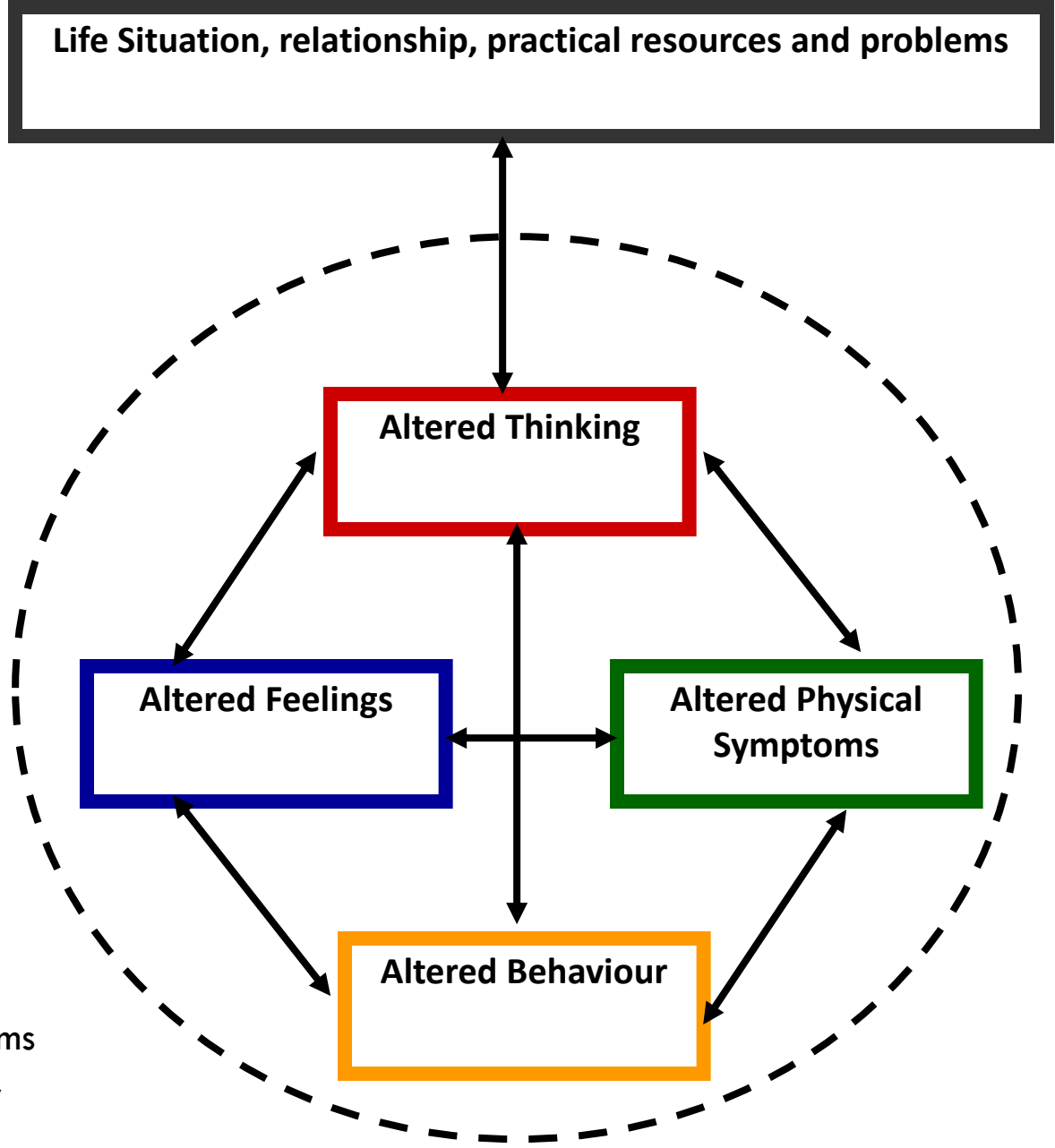
The stress response is a natural phenomena shared with all other vertebrates

If there is a perceived threat or stressor our nervous system responds/whole body

It enables us to move to keep safe when there is a threat and take action

We have an initial adrenalin response

Our body will then either: freeze, fight, flight, flop or faint according to the situation and perceived threat (fear defense cascades)



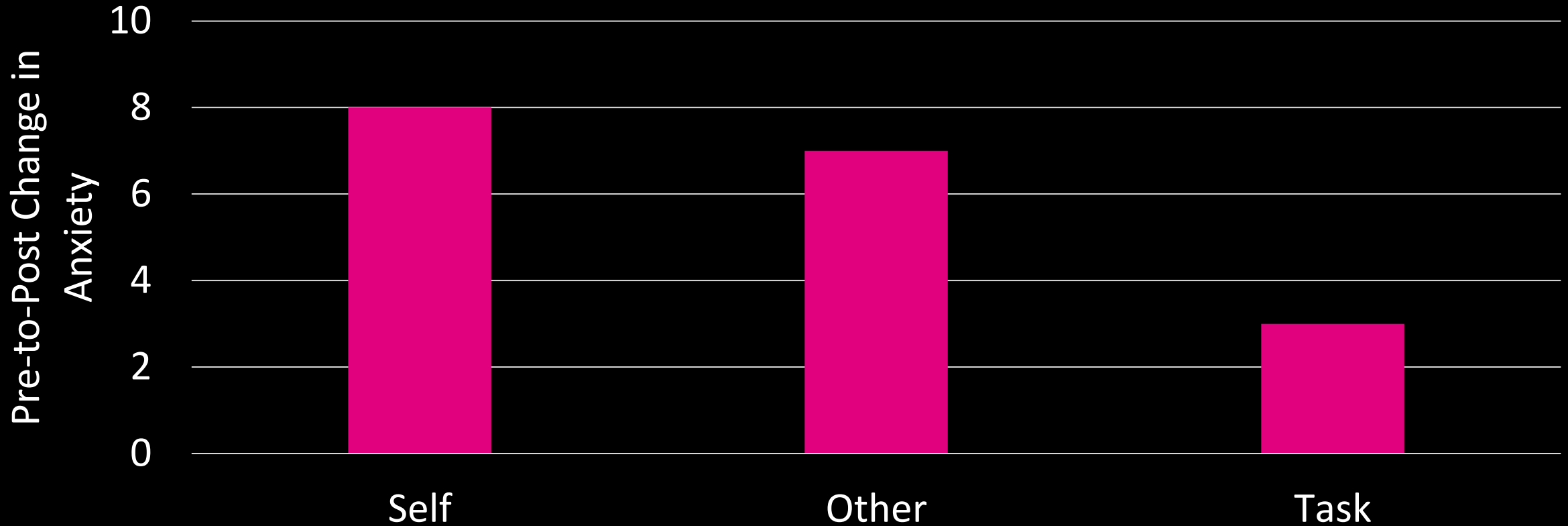
The Five Areas CBT Model Williams 2001; Williams & Chellingsworth, 2010)

- Physical: Can include rapid heartbeat, sweating, trembling, shortness of breath, nausea, GI upset, headache, dizziness, or feeling faint.
- Thinking: Can involve difficulty concentrating, racing thoughts, mind going blank, negative self-talk, or worrying excessively about the outcome/consequences.
- Feelings: Can include feelings of fear, panic, dread, irritability, frustration, helplessness, or low self-esteem related to exams.
- Behavioural: Can involve avoidance of study-related activities, procrastination, perfectionism, restlessness, or difficulty sleeping before exams.





Focusing effects on anxiety among anxious (Przeworski, 2003)



Hormones that impact levels, mood and cognitive function in exam age students

Growth Hormone (GH)

Estrogen and testosterone

Cortisol

Melatonin

Thyroid T3 and T4



10 tips for: Studying Better



Studying effectively is crucial for academic success. Here are ten tips to help you study better:

01

Create a study schedule: Establish a regular study schedule that fits your preferences and aligns with your energy levels. Consistency and routine can improve focus and productivity.

06

Take regular breaks: Allow yourself regular breaks during study sessions. Short breaks can help you recharge, prevent burnout, and improve overall concentration.

02

Find a suitable study environment: Identify an environment that is conducive to learning and minimizes distractions. Choose a quiet space with good lighting and minimal interruptions.

07

Practice retrieval and review: Test yourself regularly to reinforce your learning. Use practice quizzes, flashcards, or explain concepts to yourself or others. Review previously learned material periodically to reinforce retention.

03

Set specific goals: Clearly define your study goals for each session. This helps you stay focused and gives you a sense of accomplishment when you achieve them.

08

Use effective study techniques: Experiment with different study techniques to find what works best for you. These may include mind mapping, mnemonic devices, visualization, or creating concept maps.

04

Break it down: Break your study material into smaller, manageable chunks. This makes it easier to absorb information and prevents overwhelming feelings.

09

Stay organized: Keep your study materials organized, including notes, textbooks, and digital files. Being organized saves time and helps you locate information quickly.

05

Use active learning techniques: Engage in active learning techniques, such as summarizing information in your own words, teaching concepts to someone else, or creating flashcards. Active learning promotes better retention and understanding.

10

Take care of yourself: Prioritize self-care to optimize your study performance. Get enough sleep, eat nutritious meals, exercise regularly, and manage stress levels. Taking care of your well-being supports your ability to focus and retain information.

Revision breaks



45 MINS

HOW TO STUDY



Sleep and exam anxiety

Sleep is essential

Keep to a routine as much as possible

The bedroom for sleeping only

No revision in bedroom! Use a different space

Limit screen time <1hr before bed



Balance!

Balance study with social and reward behaviours

Take time out and use the 45 minute rule for scheduling

Social activities are important – plan in regular contact with friends



Diet and exercise

Good food impacts mood

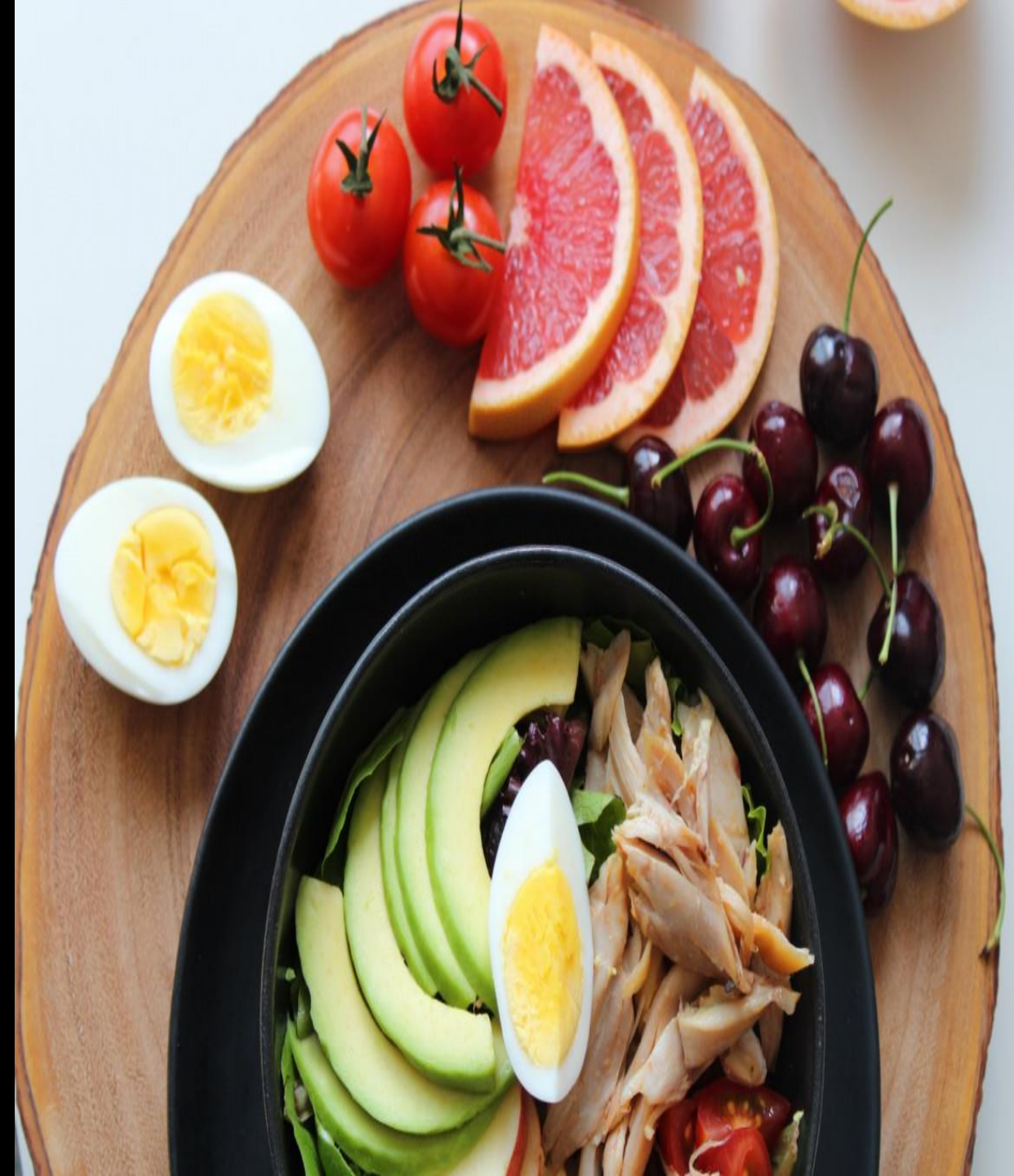
Affects performance

Impacts the body

Exercise reduces cortisol and stress

Relieves tension

Walking very helpful



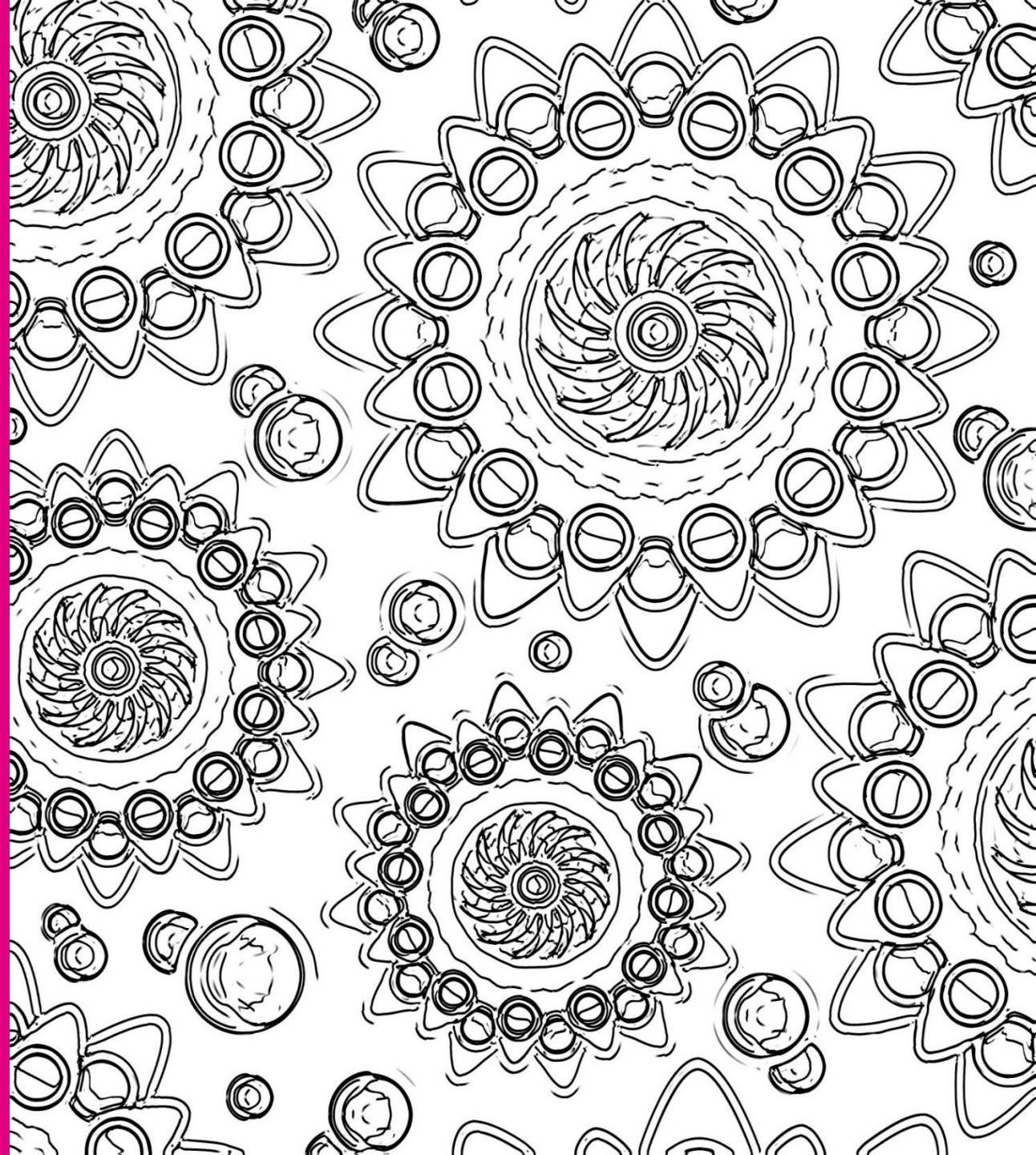
Mindfulness activities


Tasks that help focus attention in the present

Mindful colouring is an easy way to do this

Meditation

Walking meditation – notice what is around you



A woman with long dark hair is sitting in a meditative lotus position on a light-colored rug in a living room. She is wearing a white t-shirt and grey leggings. The room features a grey sofa with blue cushions, a wooden coffee table, and a window with a plant in the background. The text "guided meditation for students" is overlaid on the image.

guided meditation
for students

Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PGMR)



John: "I made sure I set time aside each morning and evening for PGMR. I was feeling extremely tense from all my worrying, causing my muscles to ache, headaches and poor sleep. At the start, I found it quite hard. Once I started practicing twice a day, after a short time I found this became easier. Your body will slowly learn how to relax your muscles and keep you more relaxed."

PGMR is an effective technique that breaks into the vicious cycle of worry and anxiety in GAD. It targets the physical symptom of tension. PGMR practiced daily helps to reduce your worries, aches and pains and improve your sleep.

You can begin to use the PGMR technique straight away. Aim to do it once, or ideally twice a day, at a set time. You only need to set aside around 15 minutes for each PGMR practice. You should do it at a planned time once or twice a day, like after brushing your teeth in the morning, to get into a routine with it. PGMR isn't a technique to do when you feel anxious, it is a skill that needs practicing daily at a neutral time.

PGMR works on the tension in your muscles we hold and helps your body learn to let tension go more easily. We all have an amount of tension in our bodies called our tension load. The amount of tension differs from person to person. The tension can trigger more stress and worrying in GAD. The more anxious we are, the more tension we keep hold of and the more tense we are, the more we worry, have aches and pains and can have difficulty sleeping. The goal of PGMR is to help to break this cycle by reducing the muscle tension you carry by helping your body learn to notice early signs of tension in your muscles and to let it go.

PGMR has a 5/15 seconds time limit. Tense for 5 then rapidly drop the tense muscle to relax it for 15

To use PGMR you tense and then release each muscle group one by one. You focus your attention on what it feels like when it is tensed and how this differs when it is relaxed. It helps your body to learn the difference and to let go of tension more easily.

You don't want to hold a muscle tense for more than 5 seconds as it could lead to stiffness or cramping. You then let go of the tension and relax the muscle for 15 seconds and focus your attention on how that muscle group feels with the tension released. Really focusing on the difference between feeling tense and relaxed.

PGMR takes regular practice and you should keep doing it at a set time for at least three months. You should also use the worry management techniques for the specific type of worry you may be having. For the first two weeks you should aim to do it up to twice a day. Then move to once per day. Only do your PGMR practice at your scheduled time each day and not at any other times.

The Fear



<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coping-with-exam-pressure-a-guide-for-students/coping-with-exam-pressure-a-guide-for-students>

<https://www.savesthestudent.org/extra-guides/top-tips-to-beat-the-exam-stress.html>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/for-young-people/feelings-and-experiences/exam-stress/>

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/coping-with-life/exam-stress/>



Nicky Dummett and Chris Williams

Overcoming

Teenage Low Mood
and Depression

A Five Areas Approach



Second Edition

A vertical decorative bar on the left side of the cover contains various colorful icons: a guitar, a vinyl record, a rainbow, a human eye, a hand holding a gear, and a hand holding a lightning bolt.

DIALECTICAL BEHAVIOR THERAPY

DBT SKILLS WORKBOOK FOR TEENS

A FUN GUIDE TO MANAGE ANXIETY AND STRESS, UNDERSTAND YOUR EMOTIONS, AND LEARN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS

TEEN THRIVE

Foreword by Kristen Dahlin, Ph.D.

30 DAY CHALLENGE INCLUDED

BEYOND COPING SKILLS

THE ULTIMATE TEENS' WORKBOOK

INTEGRATING CBT AND DBT FOR LASTING EMOTIONAL REGULATION AND PERSONAL GROWTH

An illustration of three diverse teenagers (two girls and one boy) standing on a white circular platform, interacting with large, interlocking teal gears. One boy is holding a gear up, while the others are reaching towards them.

50 ACTIVITIES

RICHARD BASS

MY ANXIOUS MIND

A black and white illustration of a person standing in a long, brightly lit hallway lined with lockers. A large clock is visible on the wall at the end of the hallway, and a bright light source creates a long shadow on the floor.

A TEEN'S GUIDE to MANAGING ANXIETY and PANIC

by MICHAEL A. TOPPINS, PhD and KATHERINE MARTINEZ, PsyD
Illustrated by MICHAEL SLOAN

Any Questions ?

