

# Anxieties and panic attacks

A large, abstract graphic made of thick, textured blue brushstrokes that forms a series of overlapping, curved lines, resembling a stylized infinity symbol or a continuous path. It occupies the lower half of the page.

 **mind** Havant and East Hants



# Mind Havant and East Hants

Havant and East Hants Mind work to promote good mental health and seek to support and empower people to lead a full life as part of their local community.

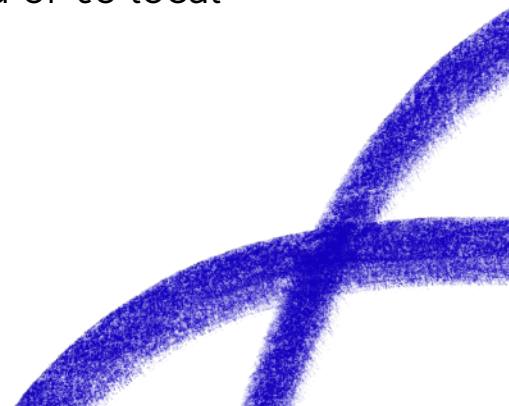
Since 1990 HEH Mind has and continues to offer a range of services and support to individuals and groups across South and East Hampshire, with some of our services, support and projects being Hampshire wide

## **Our services include:**

- Adult wellbeing
- Children and young peoples wellbeing
- Family services
- Training and workplace wellbeing
- Anti stigma/ discrimination campaigning
- Fund and awareness raising

HEH Mind services and support are available across South and East Hampshire, with some projects and service available Hampshire wide.

Importantly we are a separate charity to National Mind. If you choose to fundraise for us you will need to select 'Havant and East Hants Mind' to raise for the local services we deliver. Donations to 'Mind' will not come to HEH Mind or to local services.



# Services and support

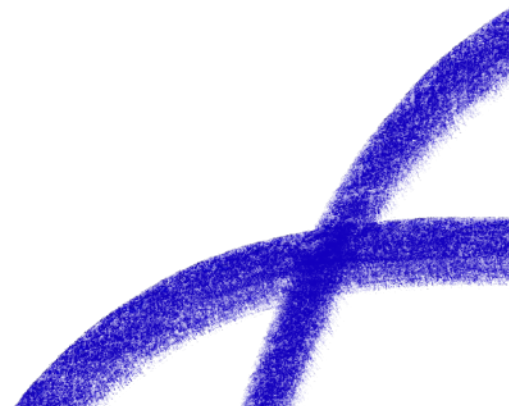
It's important to ask for help because you don't need to cope with these difficult experiences alone.

There are many health professionals who you can talk to about your mental health, and who can provide you with support in several different ways.

These may include general health or specialist support services, such as your GP, your local Mind and or Samaritans.

In addition to our services there is a range of support including:

- Anxiety UK — [anxietyuk.org.uk](https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk)
- Campaign Against Living Miserably— [thecalmzone.net](https://www.thecalmzone.net)
- Do-it (Volunteering) - [do-it.life](https://www.do-it.life)
- Side by Side (peer to peer forum) — [sidebyside.mind.org.uk](https://www.sidebyside.mind.org.uk)
- Papyrus (Crisis support Under35's) - [papyrus-uk.org](https://www.papyrus-uk.org)
- Sane Support Forum — [sane.org.uk](https://www.sane.org.uk)




# What is anxiety?

Anxiety is what we feel when we are worried, tense or afraid; particularly about things that are about to happen, or which we think could happen in the future.

Anxiety is a natural human response when we feel that we are under threat. It can be experienced through our thoughts, feelings and physical sensations. Most people feel anxious at times. It's particularly common to experience some anxiety while coping with stressful events or changes, especially if they could have a big impact on your life.

## When is anxiety a mental health problem?

Anxiety can become a mental health problem if it impacts your ability to live your life as fully as you want to. For example, it may be a problem if:

- Your feelings of anxiety are very strong or last for a long time
  - Your fears or worries are out of proportion to the situation
  - You avoid situations that might cause you to feel anxious
  - Your worries feel very distressing or are hard to control
  - You regularly experience symptoms of anxiety, which could include panic attacks
  - You find it hard to go about your everyday life or do things you enjoy
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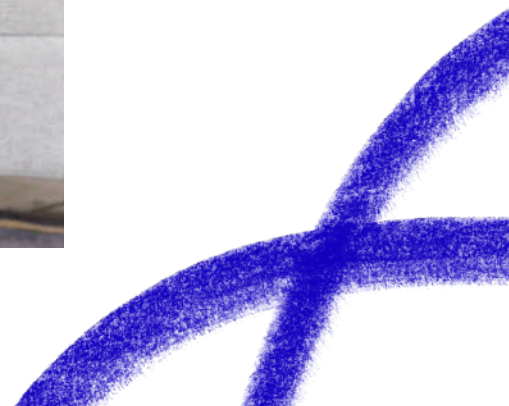
# What is a panic attack?

Panic attacks are a type of fear response. They're an exaggeration of your body's normal response to danger, stress or excitement.

## What do panic attacks feel like?

During a panic attack, physical symptoms can build up very quickly. These can include:

- A pounding or racing heartbeat
- Feeling faint, dizzy or light-headed
- Feeling very hot or very cold
- Sweating, trembling or shaking
- Nausea (feeling sick)
- Pain in your chest or abdomen
- Struggling to breathe
- Feeling like your legs are shaky or are turning to jelly
- Feeling disconnected from your mind, body or surroundings, which are types of dissociation.



# Different anxiety disorders

Anxiety can be experienced in lots of different ways. Some commonly diagnosed anxiety disorders are:

## **Generalised anxiety disorder (GAD)**

This means having regular or uncontrollable worries about many different things in your everyday life. This can be quite a broad diagnosis, meaning that the problems you experience with GAD might be quite different from another person's.

## **Social anxiety disorder**

This diagnosis means you experience extreme fear or anxiety triggered by social situations (such as parties, workplaces, or social settings).

## **Panic disorder**

This means having regular or frequent panic attacks without a clear cause or trigger.

## **Phobias**

A phobia is an extreme fear or anxiety triggered by a particular situation or a particular object.

## **Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)**

PTSD can involve experiencing flashbacks or nightmares which can feel like you're re-living all the fear and anxiety you experienced at the time of the traumatic events.

## **Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)**

This diagnosis involves having repetitive thoughts, behaviours or urges.



# Different anxiety disorders

## Health anxiety

This means experiencing obsessions and compulsions relating to illness, including researching symptoms or checking to see if you have them.

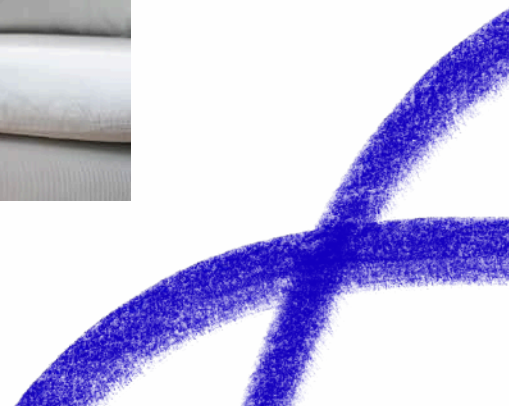
## Body dysmorphic disorder (BDD)

This involves experiencing obsessions and compulsions relating to your physical appearance.

## Perinatal anxiety or perinatal OCD

Some people develop anxiety problems during pregnancy or in the first year after giving birth.

You might not have, or want, a diagnosis of a particular anxiety disorder, but it might still be useful to learn more about these different diagnoses to help you think about your own experiences of anxiety, and consider options for support



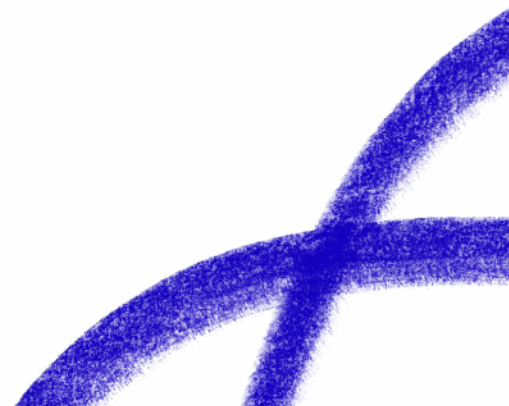
# What helps manage panic attacks?

Panic attacks can be frightening, but there are things we can do to help ourselves cope.

## During a panic attack:

- **Focus on your breathing.** It can help to concentrate on breathing slowly in and out while counting to five.
- **Stamp on the spot.** Some people find this helps control their breathing.
- **Focus on your senses.** For example, taste mint flavoured sweets or gum, or touch or cuddle something soft.
- **Try grounding techniques.** Grounding techniques can help you feel more in control. They're especially useful if you experience dissociation during panic attacks.

## After a panic attack:

- **Think about self-care.** It's important to pay attention to what your body needs after you've had a panic attack. For example, you might need to rest somewhere quietly, or eat or drink something.
  - **Tell someone you trust.** If you feel able to, it could help to let someone know you've had a panic attack. It could be particularly helpful to mention how they might notice if you're having another one, and how you'd like them to help you.
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# Talk to someone you trust

It can feel hard to start talking about how you are feeling and that is ok. Many people find that sharing their experiences can help them and actually help establish stronger relationships. It may be that just having someone listen to you and show they care can help in itself.

If you are not able to open up to someone close to you, the Samaritans run a 24-hour helpline that you can call to talk to someone confidentially.

If you are struggling with symptoms of a mental health illness, consider visiting your GP. They will know about local support and services available.



# Self care

## Look after your physical health

- Try to get enough sleep. Sleep can give you the energy to cope with difficult feelings and experiences.
- Think about your diet. Eating regularly and keeping your blood sugar stable can make a difference to your mood and energy levels. See our page on food and mood for more information.


## Try to do some physical activity

- Exercise can be really helpful for your mental wellbeing.

## Try breathing exercises

- Breathing exercises can help you cope and feel more in control.
- This can include mindfulness. Mindfulness is a way of giving your full attention to the present moment.

## Keep a diary

- It might help to make a note of what happens when you get anxious or have a panic attack. This could help spot patterns in what triggers these experiences, or notice early signs that they are beginning to happen.
  - You could also make a note of what's going well. Living with anxiety can mean you think a lot about things that worry you or are hard to do. It's important to be kind to yourself and notice the good things too.
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# Supporting a friend

You can not force anyone to get help if they do not want to. So it is important to reassure your friend/ family member that it's ok to ask for help, and that there is help out there, when they are ready.

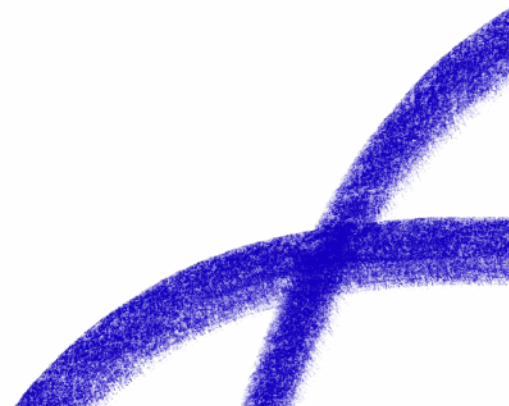
Be open. Lots of people can find it hard to open up and speak about how they're feeling. Let your friend or family member know that it's ok to talk about what they may be experiencing.

Keep in touch. Even just a text message or email to let them know that you are thinking of them can make a big difference to how someone feels.

Don't be critical. If you've not experienced depression, it can be hard to understand what your friend or family member is experiencing. It is likely they are being very critical and harsh towards themselves already.

Everyone will need different support. Talk to your friend or family member about what support they might find useful and identify what they can do for themselves.

Your mental health is important too. Considering someone else's mental health could put a strain on your wellbeing. Make sure to check in with yourself, be mindful and support your own wellbeing



# Want to know more?

Contact our Adult Wellbeing Team by calling  
023 92498916

Contact our Young People's Lighthouse Team by calling  
023 82350161

To find out about other services, workplace support,  
fundraising and events please visit our website or social  
media channels.



Havant and East Hants Mind  
Leigh Park Community Centre  
Dunsbury way, Havant,  
Hampshire, PO95BG

[www.easthantsmind.org](http://www.easthantsmind.org)  
Charity No: 116301

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