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封面故事

每當憂慮的時候，牠的頭上就會長出一片新葉，很是引人注目。因此，牠常常害怕新葉長得不夠漂亮。如此日復日的擔憂反而弄巧反拙，令到枝葉枯黃，於是牠立下決心，決定尋求好好打理枝葉的方法... ...

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Public Mental Health Laboratory
公共心理健康研究室

@pmhlabb

香港中文大學
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VOL. 07

Embrace Calm::
Managing Worries and Anxiety

Did you know?

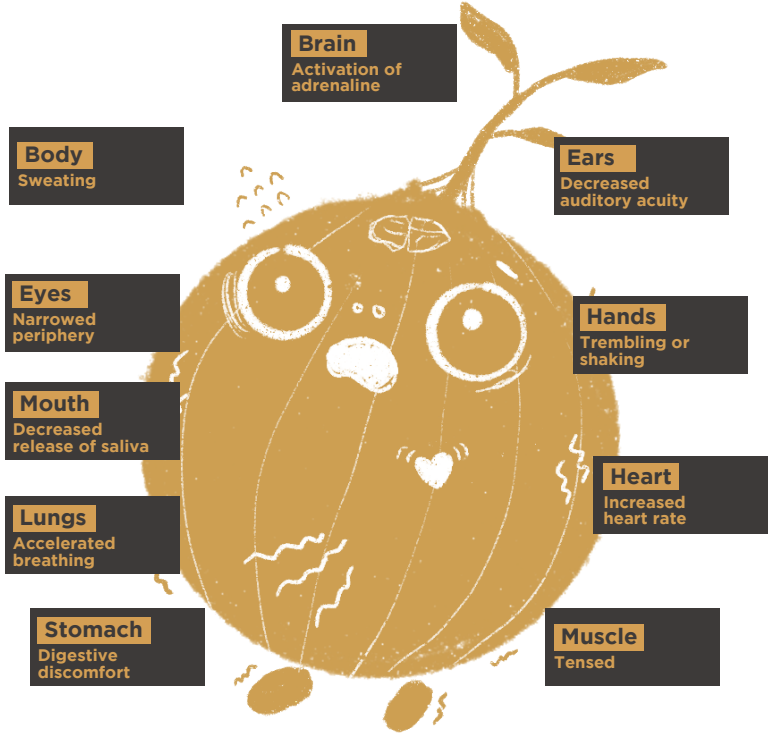
1 in every 25 people is significantly impacted in their everyday life by Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD). The symptoms include uncontrollable worrying, persistent anxiety, and a tendency to use avoidance as a way to cope with problems.[1]

What exactly is worry?

We naturally experience stress and anxiety when faced with the unknown. This is an instinctual response, because the unknown can often mean danger. Consider our ancestors living in the perilous wilderness—without preparation and vigilance, their chances of survival would be greatly diminished. The adage "Hope for the best, prepare for the worst" suggests that worry isn't always negative; in fact, it's an essential part of our existence.

Remember the "Fight-or-flight Response" we talked about when discussing stress? This protective mechanism kicks in when faced with a real or perceived threat, leading to a burden on both mind and body.

Our emotions and bodily responses are interconnected. When we are anxious or worried, our bodies can go into a "Fight-or-flight Response" mode, exhibiting various physiological reactions.



Thus, if you're constantly filled with worry and anxiety, it's like your body is perpetually in battle mode. Over time, this can sap your energy and harm your physical and mental health.

Understand your worries. ▶

Worry and anxiety don't just trigger physical responses; they also affect our thoughts and actions. Each person is unique, and it's key to pay attention to how we each respond emotionally, cognitively, physically, and behaviorally when we're anxious.

1. How does your body respond when you are worried and anxious?

2. Reflect on an event that made you feel anxious; what were you scared might happen?

3. What actions do you find yourself taking when anxiety kicks in?

4. What other emotions do you feel alongside anxiety?

Effective Ways to Ease Anxiety

Getting to know your patterns of response to worry can help you catch your own emotional state early on, enabling you to take action to relieve anxiety before it overwhelms you.

During times when emotions are high, many people draw a blank and struggle to find an escape. This is a completely normal reaction; there's no need to berate yourself for feeling anxious. In these moments, it's beneficial to remind yourself to take a moment to pause. Employ the following strategies to soothe your anxiety, and then, once you've regained your composure, tackle the problems at hand.

Practice Relaxation Techniques:

- Diaphragmatic breathing or progressive muscle relaxation
- Relaxation exercises can help ease the mind when it's clouded by worries and relieve muscle tension
- Relaxing both the body and mind helps us return to a rational state

Seek help from others:

- Engage in activities you enjoy, meet with people you trust
- Immersing yourself in hobbies or other interests can help divert your attention
- Often, an outside perspective can offer new viewpoints and angles, helping us solve problems

Irrational Estimation of Danger

Anxiety formula:

$$\text{Anxiety level} = \frac{\text{Likelihood of serious consequences occurring} \times \text{Severity of consequences}}{\text{Self-coping ability} + \text{Support}}$$

People with anxiety issues tend to exaggerate the likelihood and severity of a consequence, even perceiving life's uncertainties as catastrophic, believing they are incapable of coping. They are also more inclined to think that no one can help them, which can cause their feelings of anxiety to be magnified and spiral out of control.

"I can't make mistakes, if I make any mistake at all, it's a disaster!"

Low tolerance for the unknown, easily anxious

Since there's no chance to solve the problem, anxiety accumulates over the long term

Avoidant behaviors: Over-preparation, constant seeking of reassurance, procrastination, **avoidance**

Avoidant behaviors can temporarily reduce stress and anxiety

Learn to face life's uncertainties

To break this vicious cycle and increase your tolerance for the unknown, start with small daily habits. Little by little, as long as you persist, you will see results!

When you notice yourself worrying about the unknown, let's gather evidence to avoid overthinking:

1. Write down your predictions for the future. (Write down the worst-case scenarios you can think of.)
2. Collect evidence that supports your judgment.
3. Collect evidence that contradicts your judgment.
4. Then reconsider whether your predictions have changed, is the situation really as bad as you imagined?

Distinguishing worries

First, consider whether your worries are significant. Try to avoid linking unpleasant things around you to yourself and learn to let go of less important worries. If you think your worry is significant, you can use the following methods to cope.

Worries are of two kinds: practical worries and hypothetical worries.

Is there a practical solution to my worry right now?

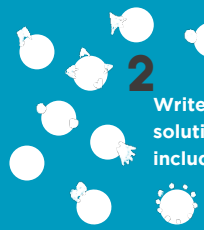
YES	NO
Practical Worries	**Hypothetical Worries**
Have immediate solutions Concern about a single event	Have no immediate solutions Concern about a series of events
Coping method 1: Problem-solving	**Coping method 2:** Worry time

Build confidence in your own coping abilities.

Coping method 1: Problem-solving

1 When facing a practical worry, write it down in detail. For example: I need to pay the electricity bill by next Friday, but I don't have enough money, I'm short XXXX dollars.

2 Write down all possible solutions you can think of, including consulting others.



3 Compare the pros and cons of each method and choose the most appropriate one. Be careful to ensure the solution has a long-term effect to avoid avoidant behavior.

4 When implementing the solution, it is best to have a clear and detailed plan. Use the SMART goals reminder to refine your plan:

- **S** Specific
- **M** Measurable
- **A** Achievable
- **R** Relevant
- **T** Time-bound

No matter the outcome, you've done your best, pat yourself on the back first!

Coping method 2: Worry time

Set aside about 15 minutes each day for "worry time" (not close to bedtime).

When you have too many worries that can't be resolved immediately and they often preoccupy your mind, try writing down your hypothetical worries, worry as much as you want during your designated "worry time," then delete what you've written.

Date/Time	Scenario	Worry	Degree of Worry (1-10)	Type	
				Practical	Hypothetical

Remind yourself that you can only worry during "worry time." Afterward, immediately focus your attention on the present task or bodily sensations, like drinking a glass of water and feeling its coolness.

Limiting your worries to a set time can help you put them aside at other times and focus on other tasks

Feeling stress and anxiety about the unknown is an innate instinct. We don't need to blame ourselves for feeling anxious.

First, remind yourself to pause, use methods to ease anxious feelings. Learn to face life's uncertainties and differentiate worries.

Address practical worries when they arise, and reserve hypothetical worries for your worry time.