

# FEEL LESS ANXIOUS

Dates, work deadlines, financial worries – everyone feels anxious at some point in their life. Try these simple techniques to tackle the stress

Words: Karen Young

*While it's perfectly natural to feel anxious at times, it's important not to let these feelings spiral out of control,*

as over time they can take a serious toll on your health and wellbeing. Whether you're worrying about a specific event on the horizon or simply feeling frazzled by the ups and downs of daily life, try one of these alternative remedies to help soothe your nerves and restore a sense of calm.

## *Take a deep breath*

Slowing down and focusing on your breath underpins many practices that aim to maintain and improve health and wellbeing, including yoga, meditation and mindfulness. While this might sound too simple to be effective, lots of studies show that breathing exercises can help to significantly reduce symptoms of stress and anxiety, and the real beauty is that these can be done discreetly, anywhere, at any time. There are lots of exercises available online, including on the Moodzone section of the NHS website ([nhs.uk](https://www.nhs.uk)).

## *Walk on the wild side*

When feeling worried or anxious, sometimes there's no better place to turn than to Mother Nature. Studies have shown that, amongst other health benefits, walking or gently exercising in forests and other green spaces can help to improve mood and reduce levels of the stress hormone, cortisol. Even if it's raining, put on your trusty mac and wellies, and take a stroll in the country or by the seaside to clear your mind and see things from a new perspective.

## *Have a soothing sip*

It can be tempting to reach for a cup of

coffee or glass of wine when in need of a pick-me-up, but drinking caffeine or alcohol in excess or on a regular basis can actually increase feelings of stress and anxiety. Instead, pour yourself some chamomile tea, which has been used throughout history to help calm the mind, body and emotions. As well as helping to soothe your worries, this humble herb can also provide relief for certain digestive, urinary and skin complaints.

## *Put pen to paper*

Most of us remember jotting down our thoughts and feelings in a secret diary when we were younger, but journaling as adults can actually help us to see things clearly and enables us to prioritise our problems and concerns. Putting pen to paper on a regular basis can also help you identify what triggers your different thoughts, emotions and behaviours, both good and bad, which in turn means you can find ways to manage these more effectively in the future.

## *Share your problems*

In an attempt to protect those around us, perhaps out of fear of being judged, it's not uncommon to 'bottle up' worries or concerns. While it might not bring the solution you need, simply confiding in someone you trust can bring an enormous sense of relief. If this is difficult for you, or there simply isn't anyone you feel you can talk to, seeing a registered counsellor or other professional therapist might be just what you need to get back on track. Alternatively, you could consider looking into cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) – it's particularly useful for people affected by anxiety and depression, and is something you can access any time via self-help books or apps (search for 'CBT NHS' online for more information).

## *Self-help therapies*

Mary Dagleish, complementary therapy practitioner and vice president of the FHT ([fht.org.uk](https://fht.org.uk)) looks at how three popular therapies can help to address anxiety.

### **REFLEXOLOGY**

"The adrenal glands, which are directly affected by stress, are responsible for the 'fight-or-flight' response we feel when under pressure. This response is meant to be short-lived, but in many cases it is a regular occurrence, leading to overworked adrenal glands. In reflexology, the adrenal reflex is found just below the ball of each foot and also on the fleshy area below the thumb on the palmar side of the hand. Gently pressing these reflex points for a few minutes can help calm the adrenal glands and reduce tension. The hands can be worked at any time of day and the feet are best worked for about five minutes per foot before bedtime."

### **AROMATHERAPY**

"Aromatherapy involves using plant essential oils to help improve your health and wellbeing. The optimum way for the body to absorb the therapeutic qualities of essential oils is through a combination of inhalation and skin absorption, via a massage blend or bath water. Lavender is one of the most studied essential oils in terms of its relaxing effects. It has been shown to calm the nervous system, lower blood pressure, heart rate and skin temperature, as well as change brain waves to a more relaxed state. Neroli, often referred to as the 'rescue remedy' of essential oils, is also a valuable oil for helping to ease anxiety and stress, along with bergamot, which is traditionally used



in Italian folk medicine to relieve tension and anxiety.

### MASSAGE THERAPY

“My speciality treatment is a natural facelift massage and I am constantly amazed how tension can be released throughout the whole body when just the face is massaged. We tend to hold emotional stress in our faces – particularly in the jaw and temples – so gently massaging these areas using upward and outward circular motions helps to promote relaxation and reduce stress, while increasing muscle tone and revitalising your skin. It is easy to do yourself, using your favourite cream or oil after cleansing. Make it a daily routine to look and feel your best.”

**Find a professional therapist at [fht.org.uk/findatherapist](http://fht.org.uk/findatherapist)**

### *Feel less stressed...*

- Have a warm bath and early night – sleep deprivation is not good for anxiety.
- Eat a healthy, balanced diet and save those tipples and treats for special occasions.
- Practice gratitude – think about the good things in your life each day.
- Try something new or rekindle an old hobby.
- Exercise, preferably outdoors and with friends or family.
- Check out Action for Happiness ([actionforhappiness.org](http://actionforhappiness.org)) for other tips and useful resources.

The Federation of Holistic Therapists (FHT) is the UK and Ireland’s largest professional association for complementary, holistic beauty and sports therapists. Founded in 1962, the FHT has been promoting the highest standards in education and therapy practice for more than 50 years. Its Complementary Healthcare Therapist Register has been accredited by the Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care.