

## Understanding and Managing Anxiety: Brief Tips and Information Sheet

- 1) **ANXIETY** consists of
  - Thoughts, images and memories (e.g. I am not okay, I am trapped , I am not safe, etc)
  - Physical sensations in the body (e.g. racing heart, throat tightens, quicker breath, stomach churning, feeling dizzy, sweating etc)
  - Emotions (anxiety, fear, panic, worry)
  - Behaviours – (avoidance, agitated movements, rumination, safety behaviours)
- 2) **ANXIETY** is a collection of thoughts, emotional/physical reactions in the body. It happens when the nervous system goes into fight or flight mode and has a physiological response in the body
- 3) **ANXIETY** is the body and mind's reaction to threat
- 4) The body and mind can perceive threat from an actual dangerous situation, OR from a thought, memory, sensation etc...(e.g. *an imagined or perceived situation*)
- 5) Therefore, **ANXIETY** can show up when there is **a real threat** OR when there is **NO threat at all**. Instead it can be triggered by thoughts, memories, images, sensations etc
- 6) **ANXIETY** thoughts, feelings or sensations CANNOT harm you . **ANXIETY** can be unpleasant but cannot harm you.
- 7) You can learn to make friends with anxiety. **ANXIETY** can show up but not derail you. You can learn to live with anxiety, to calm it, but also live alongside it.
- 8) We can learn to calm and soothe our **ANXIETY**. We can do this through:
  - Calm thoughts/words (I am safe, I am okay. This is anxiety but this will pass, I can cope with this, I can look after myself; recognising when overthinking or catastrophising)
  - Calm breathing – slow and deep (see breathing exercises handout)
  - Kind hands/touch – put a hand on your heart and send warmth and kindness to self
  - Scent- use calming scent (e.g. stress check breath in stick from This Works)
  - Reducing avoidance – continuing to face situations that cause anxiety to help become used to tackling these situations and used to being able to carry on even if anxiety shows up
  - Dropping the tug of war with anxiety. Don't try to push it away or avoid/resist it. Acknowledge it can be there, and it can and will move on/pass too.
  - Calm, purposeful, movement –(e.g. walking, stretching, yoga, swimming etc)
  - Learning that we can cope with anxiety, and panic. It isn't pleasant but it will pass.
  - Meditation and/ or calming music
  - Calming activities to engage in (e.g. colouring, cross stitch, cooking...)