

Anxiety: The Crouching Tiger

Red Balloon of the Air
Guide Series



Red Balloon
LEARNER CENTRES
For the recovery of bullied children

Anxiety

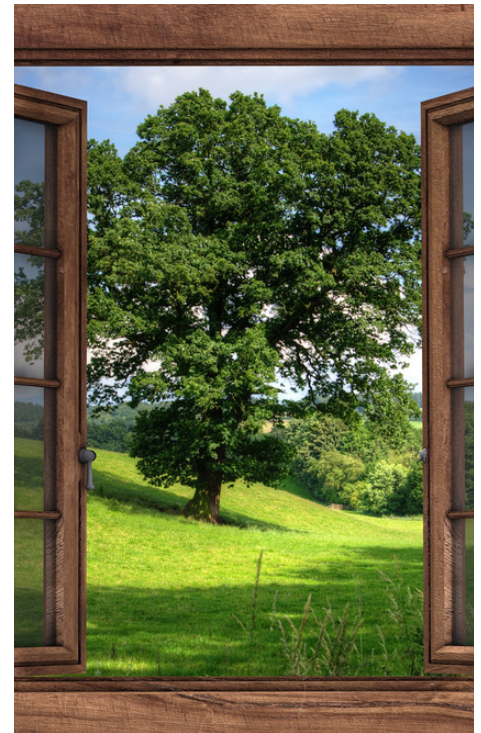
In the UK around 1 in 6 people suffer from anxiety. Cases in teens and young adults are sky-rocketing as a result of lockdown. Ancient triggers in our brains fit to fight off tigers and predators, work against us to create a sense of impending threat that can inhibit life experience and happiness. What can we do to stop the need to fight tigers?

THE WINDOW OF TOLERANCE – STAYING IN THE ZONE

Anxiety drives us into states where coping is difficult. In an overwhelmed and panic-stricken state, our minds and bodies can't function properly and we feel out of control. This is known as Hyper-arousal.

Conversely, when we feel low and listless and can't motivate ourselves and life seems pointless, this is Hypo-arousal.

We can all 'ping-pong' up and down through these states and rarely feel at peace. The Window of Tolerance reminds us to stay in a manageable place. It helps us to visualise and focus on a mid-state of coping and of being ok, while still experiencing difficulty we can use it to ensure that we don't tip into extremes.



To stay in the tolerance zone, we can:

- Take three minutes out with no interruptions and breathe deeply and slowly – it works!
- Divert yourself into a mundane activity – take the dog for a walk, make a cup of tea
- Distract yourself with a game on your phone, sudoku, doodle on a piece of paper
- Stay with difficult feelings until they pass. Sit down, breathe and let it wash over. Panic only lasts for 15 minutes!

LIFE GLASSES - I CAN SEE CLEARLY NOW...

People who suffer from anxiety tend not to see things clearly. If the environment and everything in it is seen as inherently risk-laden, we learn only to focus on the negative. An impending threat is often located in what we fear what might happen in the future, not in the present and any good or positive things fade to the background.

If we consider how impaired our view might be, we can try on some new 'life' glasses which can change what we see. By actively practising to see the positives in the present moment and in having a willingness to question our perceived levels of threat we may induce a reduction in anxious feelings.



There are many types of new specs to choose from:

- Mindfulness Glasses – Root yourself in the present, take in everything around you
- Threat Reduction Glasses – “What is the likelihood of this being harmful to me on a scale of 1 -10?”
- Coping Glasses – “I can tolerate uncomfortable feelings and lesser degrees of ‘awfulness’. I know this because I have done it before many times.”

REFRAME THE PICTURE AND RE-FOCUS THE LENS

Anxiety is a condition fuelled by overthinking. The body is triggered into fear responses by the cortex in the brain. It trains itself to think in a particular way that keeps a sense of threat permanently in mind. These thought patterns generate pessimism, catastrophising, obsessing, worrying, perfectionism and guilt and shame.

An anxious life is a miserable life. The lens is narrowly focused and the field of vision is dim.

Coping Thoughts can widen our experience and prepare us better for challenge. Practice these thoughts daily and the world will seem brighter!

- My anxiety always passes eventually
- I will get through this
- No one is perfect
- Its normal to make mistakes
- This feeling has been wrong before
- Pleasing everyone is impossible

