



## Dr. Mark Cross

### Top tips about anxiety

**A practical guide by Dr. Mark Cross**

# Understanding Anxiety

Anxiety is a natural emotional response that can be harnessed to improve performance, but needs management when it becomes overwhelming. Recognising the early signs and being able to identify your triggers both internally and externally, is your first step to taking control.

## Morning Routine

Start your day on the right foot

- Wake up early: Stick to a consistent wake-up time.
- Breathe: Incorporate morning breathing exercises to center your thoughts, even if it's just taking 3 deep breaths, every little helps.
- Routine is key: Follow a structured morning routine to avoid rushing.

## Exercise Regularly

Movement is medicine

- Stay active: Incorporate simple exercises like walking or stretching into your daily routine.
- Endorphins are key: Exercise to release endorphins, which naturally combat anxiety.

## Mindfulness Throughout the Day

Stay present to stay calm

- Practice mindfulness: Engage in activities that keep you in the present. Mindfulness is about focusing on something in the here and now, staying in the present, being present.
- Focus on the now: Use apps like Headspace or Insight Timer for guided sessions.

## Finding Balance

Understand and adjust

- Self-compassion: Be kind to yourself. Perfection isn't always possible.
- Progress not perfection: Focus on making measurable improvements.

## Alcohol Moderation

Think before you drink

- Avoid alcohol: Especially if anxious, as it can exacerbate anxiety the next day.

## Gut Health & Diet

What you eat affects how you feel

- Probiotics: Include foods like yogurt or kombucha in your diet.
- Avoid triggers: Reduce intake of gluten, processed foods, and sugar.

## Sleep & Caffeine Management

Good sleep is foundational

- Limit caffeine: Maximum four shots a day and avoid caffeine ten hours before bedtime.
- Pre-sleep routine: No food three hours before bed and limit screens an hour before sleep.

# Breathing Through Anxiety

The aim here is to engage the diaphragm and use deep abdominal breathing, which helps to calm the mind-body system.

## 1. 5 Finger Breathing Exercise

Hold out your one hand, with the index finger of the other hand, trace the fingers of the outstretched hand breathing in while going up the finger, breathing out when tracing down the other side. Continue the exercise with the other hand. Repeat, focus, breathe.

**Tip: Doodling whilst focusing on breathing can help you to stay present.**

## 2. Counting Breaths to Sleep

When trying to sleep or slowing your thinking, start by lying in a comfortable position, breathe in, hold for 5 counts, breathe out, hold for 5 counts (some people don't like counting, just estimate if that is the case), continue for 5 tries. You can continue as long as you need to, it works.

**And remember, don't be hard on yourself, your body is speaking to you in moments of angst, needing attention - not trying to freak you out.**





## When to Seek Help

Remember, you're not alone

Professional Help: Consulting with a GP or psychologist can provide tailored strategies and support.

## Resources for Further Support

**Apps:** Headspace, Insight Timer, Smiling Mind

**Websites:** Beyondblue - [www.beyondblue.com.au](http://www.beyondblue.com.au)

Black Dog Institute - [www.blackdoginstitute.org.au](http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au)

**Read:** "Expert Advice from a Neurotic Shrink Who's Lived with Anxiety All His Life" by Dr. Mark Cross [www.booktopia.com.au/anxiety-dr-mark-cross/book/9780733339424.html](http://www.booktopia.com.au/anxiety-dr-mark-cross/book/9780733339424.html)

## Takeaways

Managing anxiety is about small daily practices and better understanding your own response and triggers to both your internal and external environment. Use this guide to help track your progress, and remember, seeking help is a sign of strength.

# Daily Journal Prompts

Journaling can be a powerful tool for managing anxiety.

It helps to reflect on our emotions, identify triggers, and track progress over time.

Please print these daily journal prompts to track how you're feeling over the course of a week (we suggest doing this for as many weeks as possible).

## 1. Morning Reflection:

How do I feel today on a scale of 1-10?

What is one word that describes my mood this morning?

What am I most anxious about today?

## 2. Evening Reflection:

What were my anxiety levels like throughout the day? Did they fluctuate?

What triggers did I encounter today, and how did I respond?

What were three challenges I faced today? How did I handle them?

### 3. Coping Strategies:

What coping strategies did I use today? Were they effective?

What new coping mechanism can I try tomorrow?

Did I take any time for self-care today? What did I do and how did it make me feel?

### 4. Physical and Emotional State:

Did I experience any physical symptoms of anxiety today? (e.g. headaches, stomachaches, rapid heartbeat)

What thoughts were going through my mind during moments of anxiety?

How did my body feel today in moments of calm vs. anxiety?

## 5. Sleep and Habits:

How did I sleep last night? How many hours? Was it restful?

What habits do I think might be impacting my anxiety? (e.g., caffeine, alcohol, screen time)

What can I do differently tomorrow to potentially reduce my anxiety?

## 6. Gratitude and Positive Focus:

What am I grateful for today?

What was the best moment of the day and why?

Who or what made me smile today?



## 7. Looking Forward:

What is one thing I am looking forward to tomorrow?

What are my goals for tomorrow?

How can I make tomorrow a better day?

## 8. Support and Resources:

Who did I talk to today? Was it helpful discussing my feelings?

What did I read or learn today that might help me manage my anxiety?

Do I feel like I need more support managing my anxiety?

If so, from whom or what could I seek help?

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