

Don't let fear and anxiety rule your life. Try these holistic self-help techniques and banish your angst for good, says Liz Alvis

Fight your fears!

Everyone experiences anxiety in some form or other, and in these uncertain times stress and worry are very much on the increase. Around one in 20 people are now thought to suffer from Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD), where negative and anxious thoughts dominate daily life. More and more people are turning to anti-depressants in a bid to cope with crippling anxiety, but natural remedies and self-help techniques can provide an alternative solution. Here, our holistic health experts offer some strategies to beat anxiety and fear.

Learn to let go

"Hypnosis is a great way of letting go of fears and anxieties," says hypnotherapist Joseph Clough (josephclough.com). "The reason for this is because if we had conscious control over the fear or anxiety, we would simply let it go by ourselves. If we can't stop it ourselves, it must mean our unconscious mind is running the fear. Through hypnosis, or a deep state of relaxation, we can speak directly to the unconscious mind to resolve the fear and anxiety easily and effortlessly."

Joseph suggests the following exercise: "Close your eyes and imagine seeing yourself in a movie screen in your mind, acting calmly and confidently in the situation that you would usually be anxious about. Then, having replayed the movie several times for 10 minutes or so, step inside the movie as if you're looking through your own eyes. See, hear and feel exactly the way you wish to be and imagine doing everything perfectly. This retrains the unconscious mind to firstly dissociate from any negative feelings, and to also learn new associations – you're installing new triggers of confidence and comfort which will allow you to be just the way you want to be in any situation."

Just sitting

NLP expert Ali Campbell (alicampbell.com) recommends the following technique, known as 'just sitting'. He explains: "Find a quiet place, close your eyes and just allow your thoughts to come to mind, (I'm sure there will be plenty at first).

Acknowledge them and then just let them go. Don't think of anything consciously – this is not the time for your 'to-do' list. Just allow thoughts to come into your mind and let them go. Do this for 15 minutes every day and you'll quickly notice that a gap opens up between you and your thoughts. The next thing you'll notice is that you just don't feel compelled to react to your thinking. No more worry or fear. Try it – it's spooky the way it works..."

Hit the spot

"Emotional Freedom Technique or EFT is an effective treatment if suffering from anxiety or fear," says psychologist and holistic therapist Nicola Phoenix (nicolaphoenix.com).

"EFT views the cause of all negative, emotional reactions as a disturbance in the body's energy system. Like acupuncture, EFT directly impacts on the body's energy flow to bring effective and often rapid relief from long-standing or chronic problems. EFT works by gently tapping specific meridians (energy points) whilst mentally

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and verbally tuning into the issue or problem. Disturbances to the flow of energy are removed along with the emotional response and anxiety.

A technique to use any time you feel anxious, fearful or panicked is the Quick Anxiety Stopper. This involves tapping on three specific energy points. Begin tapping gently with one hand under your eye, then under the arm (with a flat hand in line with your bra strap), then a flat hand tapping the side of the upper chest just under the collarbone. After tapping these points for a few seconds each, take a deep breath in and out. You can do numerous rounds until you feel calm and relaxed."

Be mindful

"Practising mindfulness can help to reduce anxiety," says Jules McClean, clinical advisor for counsellingdirectory.org.uk. "Being in the moment, experiencing your feelings and bodily sensations, can reduce harmful thought patterns as the brain can only make use of one type of activity at a time. Try the following:

- When you are in the shower, don't think about anything – just enjoy the sensations of the water and listen to the sounds you can hear. Don't live your life twice and anticipate all that could go wrong – think instead of what may go right.
- Take five to 10 minutes in the morning to be quiet and meditate. Look out of the window, listen to the sounds of nature and be aware of everything around you.
- In the evening, look at the day's activities, being kind to yourself for what you've accomplished. You've done enough for today – enjoy your evening and be in the present."

Soothe your stress

"Feelings of anxiety and panic can be augmented by a lack of certain nutrients, causing neurotransmitter deficiencies and hormone imbalance," says Janice Wilson, founder of simplyvital.com.

"Look to phenylethylamine (PEA) as a natural treatment for anxiety. We produce PEA naturally in the brain when we feel calm and joyful. PEA fosters new connections between brain cells, and by raising the level of freely circulating dopamine in the nervous system, the neurotransmitter that gives us our get up and go, we are motivated to change for the better and have added energy and resilience in our nervous system. Two foods with significant levels of PEA are raw cocoa and Klamath algae. For effective concentrated sources of PEA try Wildbars, £2.99, or vitalCALM capsules, £47.99 for 120, from Simply Vital."