



HOW CAN I COPE WITH ANXIETY?

Anxiety or fear are generally normal and sensible reactions to a dangerous situation; they help us avoid danger and thus survive. Sometimes, however, anxiety emerges even when there is no physical danger. When this lasts for a long time and affects your behaviour, it can have negative consequences for your well-being, your social network, schoolwork, etc. Studying at university is a challenging activity that activates your stress system, so it is normal to experience anxiety as a student. Moreover, 11.2% of the Belgian population had an anxiety disorder in 2018. So you are not alone.

For example, people can be anxious about:

- failing (fear of failure)
- being judged negatively by others (social anxiety)
- specific situations, places, animals, etc. (phobia)
- for internal stimuli that are perceived as threatening (panic disorder)

The following 5 tips are intended to help you cope with anxiety.

“HELP, I’M HAVING THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS OF ANXIETY”

• Allow yourself to be anxious

Be aware of your anxiety and name it: “This is the anxiety I am feeling right now”.

Realise that this anxiety will also pass: “It’s okay to feel this way; it’ll be over soon.”

Do not try to push away the anxiety and other negative emotions; let them exist for a while and study them.

• Find out what is going on

Study the current situation; what is actually going on? What negative thoughts accompany this situation? Do you recognise these thoughts and interpretations from the past? Try to think clearly: “Should I believe and follow these anxious thoughts?”. Are there any other emotions present, such as sadness or anger?

• Connect with your body

Anxiety can cause different physical reactions. Breathe in and out; feel what is happening in your body in the here and now. Be kind to yourself and gently examine where in your body you can feel the anxiety.

- **Be alert when avoiding certain activities**

Avoidance is a solution that often works very well in the short term and can quickly dull the anxiety. Unfortunately, this has negative effects in the long run and the anxiety will increase in new situations.

- **Seek support and/or professional help**

Find someone you can trust. You don't have to tell this person everything. Sometimes, it's enough to tell them that you are not feeling well. You can also contact Awel anonymously (102 or via www.awel.be), the Tele-Onthaal helpline (106 or via www.teleonthaal.be), and the Suicide Helpline (1813) with questions about suicidal thoughts.

References

<https://checkjezelf.be/themas/angst>
<https://www.fitinjehoofd.be/veel-voorkomende-klachten/angst>