

Managing Stress and Anxiety

A lesson from Instagram

Journey_to_Wellness

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Illustrations and wording are from the Journey_to_Wellness Instagram page

ANXIOUS

A state of unease, fear, or nervousness about what could happen in the unknown future; very cautious and alert to potential dangers.

You might feel anxious when you have to start something new, your family is under stress, it's very important to you to feel safe, or you often ruminate over the "What If's."



Quite often with anxiety, our system is noticing burnt toast and sounding the alarm!

We can be thankful for this system while still retraining our brains to sound false alarms less, or to respond differently to them at least!

WHAT IS ANXIETY?



ANXIETY IS A NORMAL EMOTION... IT IS YOUR BODY'S DEFENSE SYSTEM TRYING TO TELL YOU THAT IT FEELS YOU ARE FACING A THREAT.

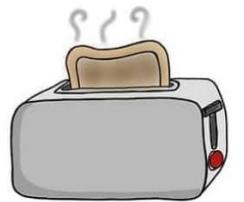
THIS DEFENSE SYSTEM ACTS A BIT LIKE A SMOKE ALARM...



SOMETIMES IT ALERTS YOU TO REAL DANGER, LIKE WHEN A SMOKE ALARM DETECTS FIRE. THIS IS USEFUL!



SOMETIMES IT IS A FALSE ALARM... LIKE WHEN YOU BURN THE TOAST! OUR ANXIETY CAN ALSO "GO OFF" ABOUT PERCEIVED THREATS THAT AREN'T TRULY DANGEROUS. IT IS JUST YOUR BODY TRYING TO KEEP YOU SAFE.



FEELING DOWN?

START HERE & WORK THROUGH EACH TASK AS YOU START YOUR DAY...

MAKE SURE
YOU ARE DRESSED
FOR THE DAY IN
CLEAN CLOTHES

TAKE A SHOWER
OR BATH IF YOU
HAVEN'T YET

CHECK-IN WITH YOUR THOUGHTS,
NOTICE ANY UNHELPFUL ONES &
EITHER CHALLENGE THEM OR PRACTISE
MINDFUL ACCEPTANCE

HAVE A GOOD
BREAKFAST & MINDFULLY
DRINK A CUPPA

CHECK IN WITH
YOUR BODY; HOW
DO YOU PHYSICALLY
FEEL? WHAT DOES
YOUR BODY NEED?

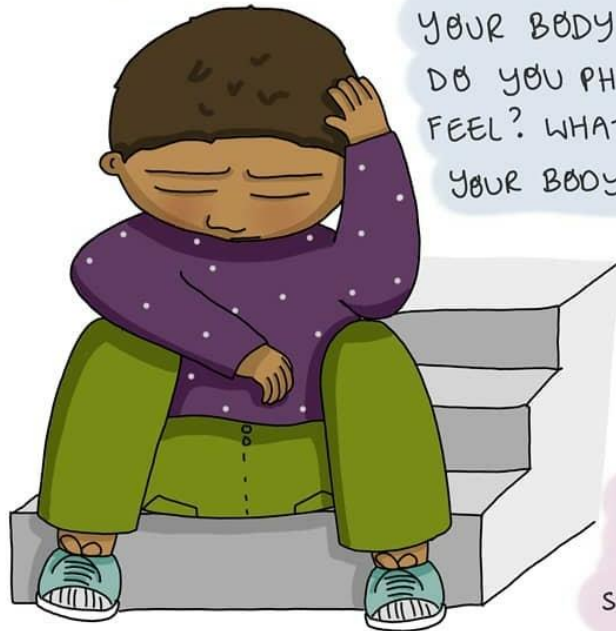
PLACE ONE HAND
ON YOUR BELLY &
ONE OVER YOUR HEART
& TAKE SOME DEEP BREATHS

REPEAT SOME
AFFIRMATIONS LIKE "I AM
WORTHY", "I WILL BE KIND TO
MYSELF TODAY", "I CAN GET
THROUGH HARD TIMES"

STRETCH, TRY
'LEGS UP THE
WALL', GO FOR A
QUICK WALK OR
STAND OUTSIDE

HAVE A GLASS
OF WATER

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FEELING ANXIOUS?

↓
ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT A
FUTURE EVENT OR WORRY?

YES

ARE YOU HAVING
"WHAT IF THOUGHTS",
CATASTROPHISING OR
'PREDICTING THE FUTURE'?

YES

WRITE OUT YOUR
UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS
THEN CHALLENGE
THEM

NO

PROBLEM
SOLVE YOUR
WORRY, SET
CLEAR ACTIONS
THEN DISTRACT
YOURSELF

NO

ARE YOU HAVING
PHYSICAL ANXIETY
SYMPTOMS?

YES

STOP & TAKE
DEEP BREATHS,
PRACTISE
MINDFULNESS,
DRINK SOME
WATER & GO
FOR A
WALK IF YOU
CAN.

NO

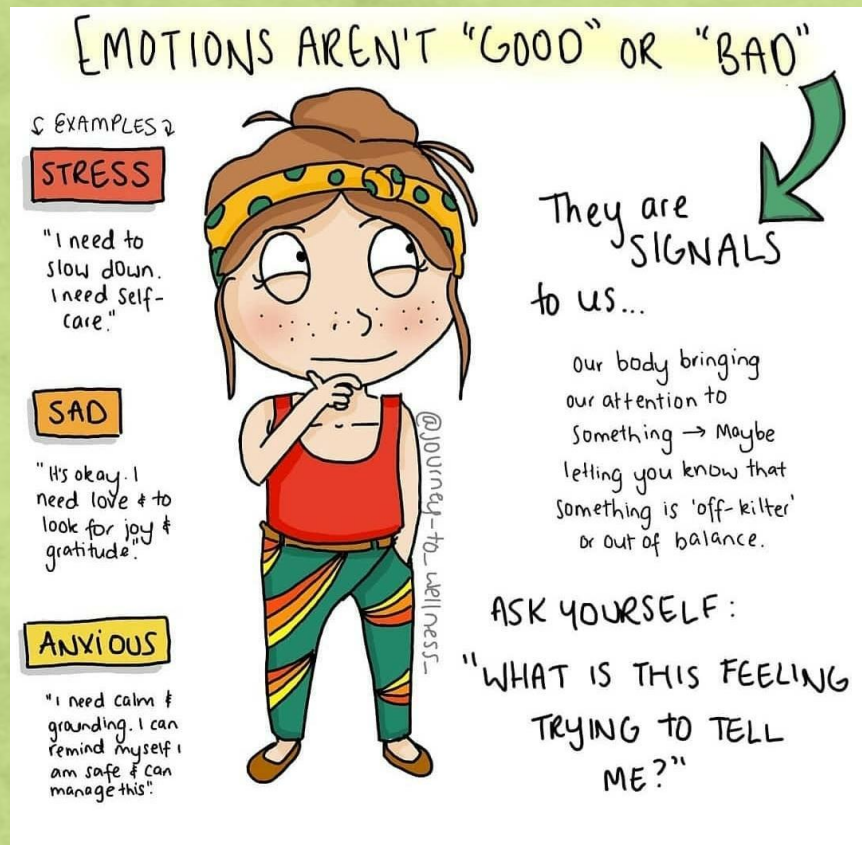
JOURNAL
ABOUT
YOUR
ANXIETY
& ASK
YOURSELF
WHAT YOU
NEED
RIGHT NOW



HAVING A PANIC ATTACK?

- ① TAKE SOME SLOW, DEEP BREATHS
- ② GET GROUNDED - FOCUS ON YOUR FEET ON THE FLOOR
- ③ RUN COLD WATER OVER YOUR HANDS OR SPLASH YOUR FACE
- ④ RIDE IT OUT - DON'T FIGHT IT. REMIND YOURSELF IT WILL PASS & OTHERS LIKELY WON'T EVEN NOTICE IT'S HAPPENING

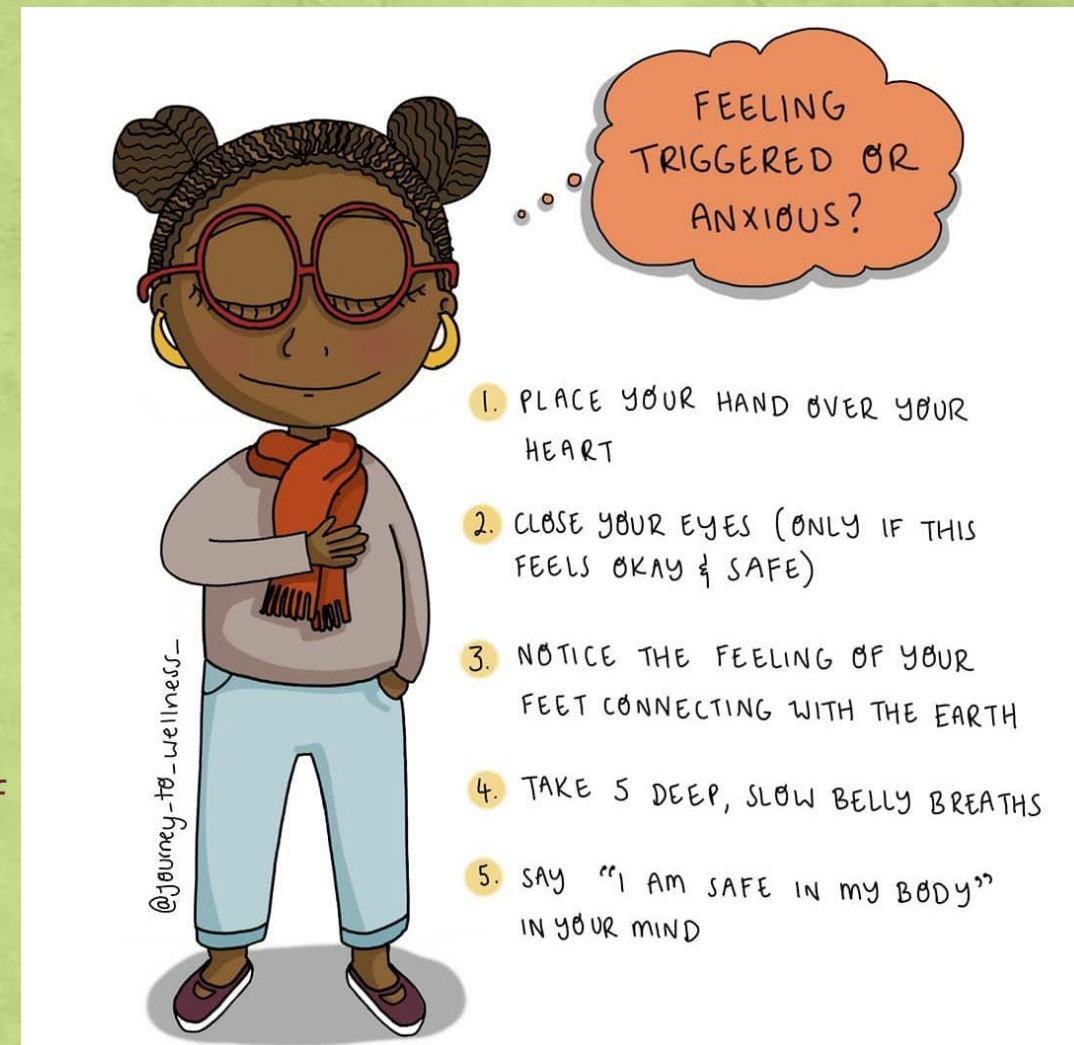
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A little grounding exercise for times when you are feeling triggered, anxious, stressed or overwhelmed.

When we feel triggered or anxious, we go into a sympathetic nervous system response. Taking deep, slow breaths and reminding our minds of our place in the present and that we are safe, helps us to switch on the parasympathetic nervous system to restore our balance.

Try this out – how does it feel for you?





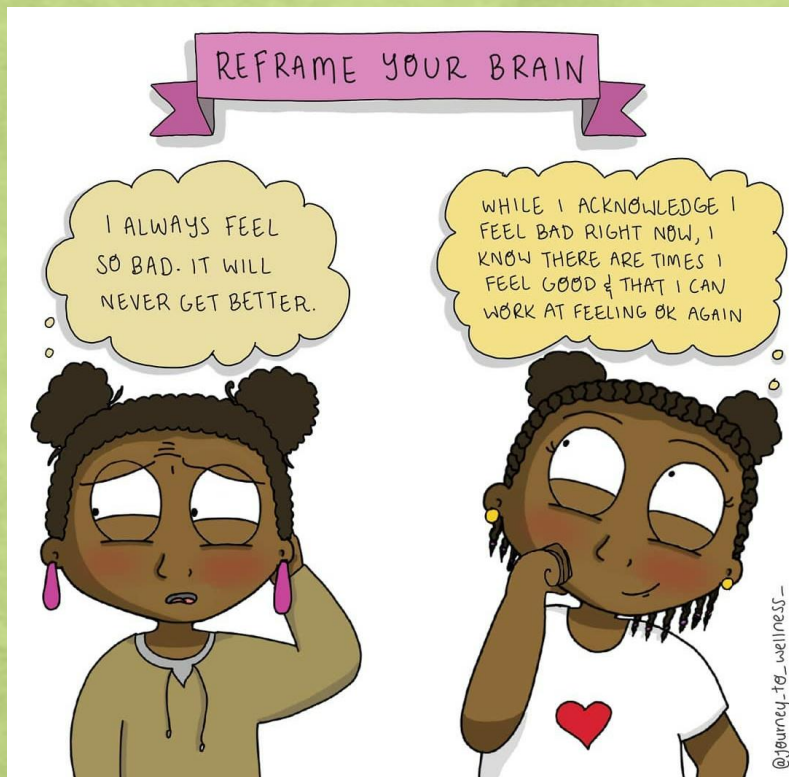
Overthinking can be a really sticky habit – Sometimes we believe (even unconsciously) that ruminating on something gives us some sort of control over it, maybe preventing the worry from happening or protecting us in some way. Therefore we are reluctant to let go of this habit.

The majority of what we worry about doesn't happen.

The stuff that does happen is usually less catastrophic than we imagine it to be. And we cope with it better than we think. A lot of what we worry about isn't within our control.

The truth is, no matter how much we worry about something or think about it – thinking doesn't control the outcome. Overthinking doesn't control whether it happens or not. It doesn't help.

ACTION however, can influence the outcome.

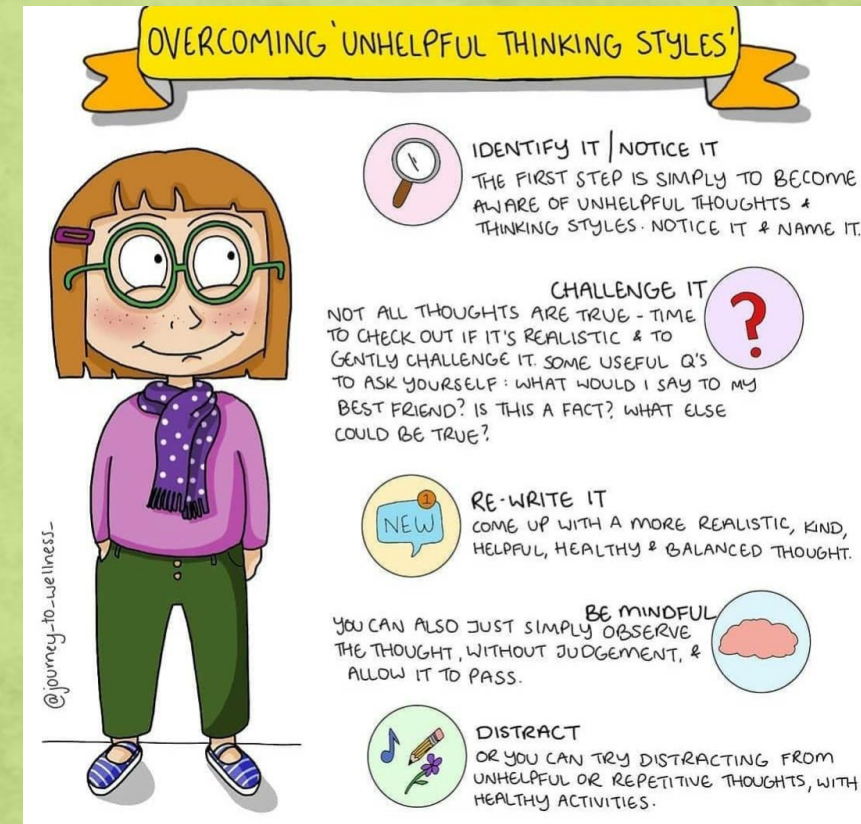
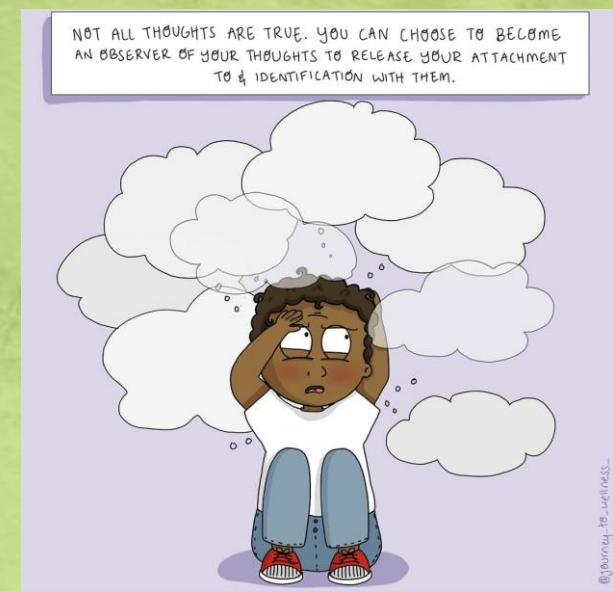


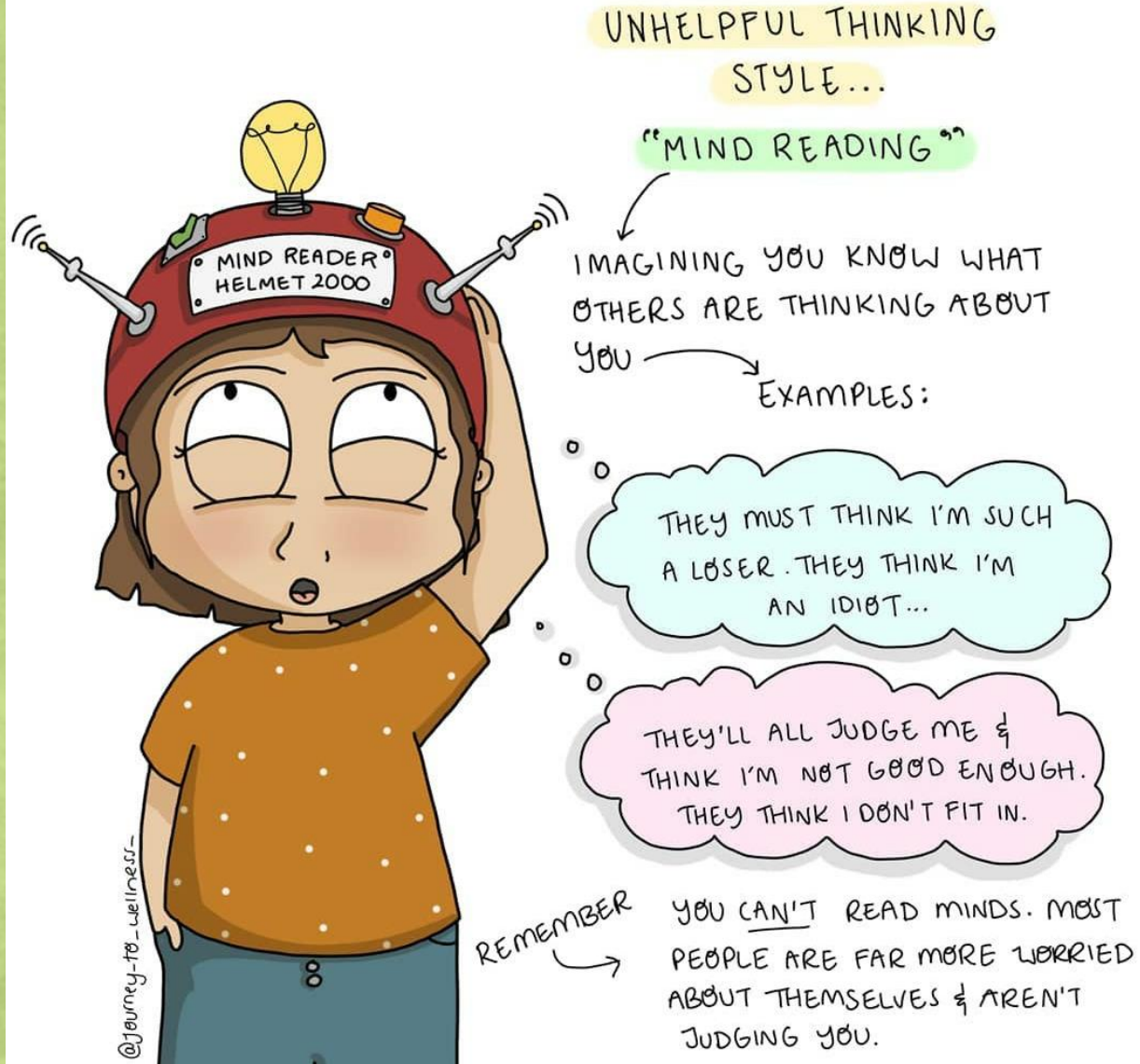
Here is a simple way to gently challenge unhelpful thoughts. This way we are still acknowledging the feeling, honouring that, while providing the space for alternative ways to look at things.

Can you try this with some of your thoughts today? What would the reframe sound like?

Thoughts are just thoughts. Not all of them are true, or helpful, or kind...not all of them serve us. We can become the mindful observer of our thoughts, noticing them, without attachment or judgement.

Of course it is easier said than done, and some thoughts are much harder to sit back and observe than others – but this mindful practice takes repetition and time, and is well worth it! It is very freeing to realise that we do not have to let our thoughts define us or boss us around anymore!





The Mind Reading thinking style and anxiety so often go hand in hand. It can also feed in to depression, perfectionism and relationship difficulties.

Have you recognised this in your own thoughts? Remind yourself that you **CAN'T** tell what other people are thinking.

Most of the time they aren't thinking about you. Most of the time people are far more worried about themselves and their own worlds and that is what they are thinking about.

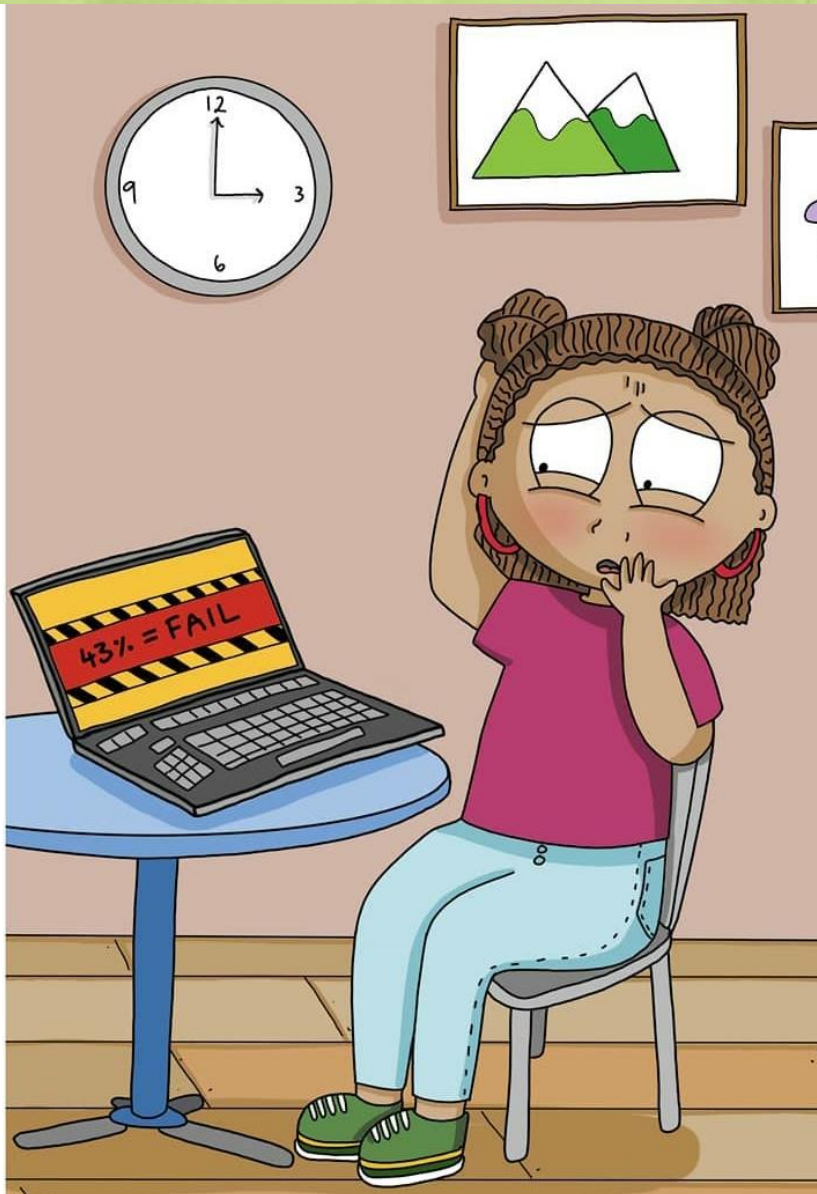
And if they are thinking about you, most of the time it is not in the judgemental way that you think it is.

UNHAPPY WITH YOUR RESULTS?

REMINDE YOURSELF...

- WE DON'T PERFORM AT OUR BEST UNDER STRESS. RESULTS FROM STRESSFUL EXAMS OR WORK PROJECTS DO NOT ACCURATELY REFLECT YOUR ABILITIES
- ONE FAILURE DOES NOT MEAN YOU ARE A FAILURE AS A PERSON
- THESE RESULTS ARE NOT A PREDICTOR OF FUTURE SUCCESS
- TREAT YOURSELF WITH THE SAME LEVEL OF COMPASSION YOU WOULD SHOW TO A FRIEND

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DISAPPOINTED IN YOUR PERFORMANCE?

→ NOT THE EXAM RESULTS, WORK PROJECT FEEDBACK ETC THAT YOU WERE HOPING FOR?



WATCH OUT FOR THESE UNHELPFUL THINKING STYLES:

BLACK & WHITE THINKING - ALL OR NOTHING THOUGHTS LIKE "IF IT ISN'T PERFECT THEN IT'S A FAILURE"

CATASTROPHISING - BLOWING THINGS OUT OF PROPORTION THOUGHTS LIKE "IF I DON'T ACE THIS THEN I HAVE NO FUTURE / I'LL BE FIRED"

LABELLING - CALLING YOURSELF NAMES WITH THOUGHTS LIKE "I'M USELESS", "I'M A FAILURE" OR "I'M STUPID"

CATCH THESE THOUGHTS & BE MINDFULLY AWARE THEY AREN'T TRUE OR HELPFUL. BE COMPASSIONATE WITH YOURSELF.



- UNHELPFUL THINKING STYLE -

HOW "SHOULD", "MUST" & "HAVE TO"
THOUGHTS AFFECT YOU...

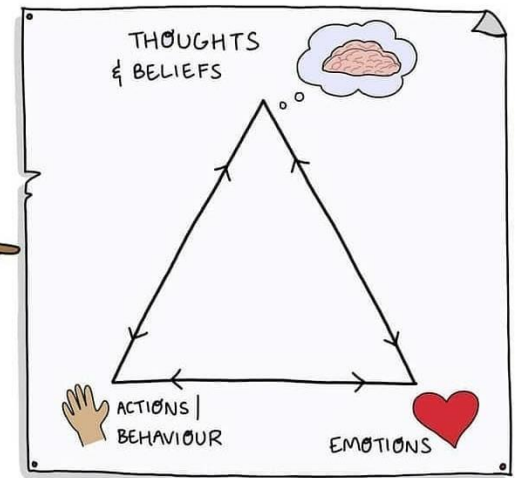


In Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) one of the 'unhelpful thinking styles' that you learn to identify and challenge is "should/must/have to" thinking.

When you use this language you place a great deal of pressure and expectation on yourself. When you use it in the context of other you often end up feeling resentful, angry, frustrated, misunderstood...

YOUR THOUGHTS CAN EFFECT HOW YOU FEEL & ACT.

YOU CAN'T CONTROL THE THOUGHTS THAT POP INTO YOUR HEAD...
...BUT YOU CAN CHOOSE HOW YOU RESPOND TO THEM & HOW YOU ACT. THIS THEN CHANGES YOUR THOUGHTS & FEELINGS.



Here are some examples of this thinking style in action:

- "I shouldn't have done that..." (guilt)
- "I have to do all the chores today" (pressure)
- "I should have studied more" (regret)
- "He should know exactly why I'm upset" (anger/disappointment)
- "She shouldn't have said that about me" (resentment)

SHIFT YOUR MINDSET

I MADE A MISTAKE...
I'm ALWAYS
SCREWING UP!
I'm A TOTAL
FAILURE & I'm
COMPLETELY
USELESS.

FEELING: WORTHLESS, DOWN
& INSECURE

LEADS TO: GIVING UP, NOT
TRYING, LOSS OF CONFIDENCE,
SELF DOUBT, MORE PERCEIVED
'FAILURE' & DECREASED
SELF-ESTEEM



I MADE A MISTAKE...
WE ALL MAKE
MISTAKES! WHAT CAN
I LEARN FROM THIS FOR
NEXT TIME?
I'M PROUD OF MYSELF
FOR TRYING.

FEELING: SELF-COMPASSION,
OPTIMISTIC, OKAY IN SELF

LEADS TO: TRYING AGAIN,
GROWING FROM MISTAKES,
BUILDS SELF-CONFIDENCE,
INCREASES SELF-ESTEEM
& FUTURE SUCCESS



POSITIVE SELF-TALK

WHOLEHearted
SCHOOL COUNSELING

WAYS TO STRENGTHEN
YOUR INNER COACH

1. Pay attention to what you are saying to yourself and notice if your self-talk is negative or positive.



NEGATIVE SELF-TALK

- When you "speak to yourself" in an unhelpful and hurtful way.
- Judgmental, blaming, shaming, and discouraging messages that come from your Inner Critic.



POSITIVE SELF-TALK

- When you "speak to yourself" like you would to someone you love and care about.
- Encouraging, supportive, and compassionate messages that come from your Inner Coach.



2. Ask yourself, "Would I speak to my good friend in this way?"

3. Channel your Inner Coach, and think about how you can talk to yourself in a way that is supportive and encouraging.

4. Remember that it's okay to make mistakes. You are human, after all!

5. Remind yourself of your strengths and unconditional worth & lovability.

FEELING OVERWHELMED?

AM I...?

COULD I...?

✗ EATING WELL, GETTING OUTSIDE & TAKING CARE OF MYSELF?

✗ GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP?

✗ WORKING/STUDYING TOO MANY HOURS?

✗ TAKING ON TOO MUCH RESPONSIBILITY?

✗ DOING TOO MUCH AT ONCE?

✗ PRIORITISING THE NEEDS OF OTHERS?

✓ 'LET GO A LITTLE' & DELEGATE?

✓ TAKE MORE BREAKS FOR SELF-CARE?

✓ GET AN EARLY NIGHT OR TAKE A NAP?

✓ HAVE SOME TECHNOLOGY FREE TIME?

✓ EXERCISE, STOP & BREATHE, MEDITATE OR GET OUTSIDE?

✓ PRIORITISE & SCHEDULE MY 'TO-DO LIST'?



ANXIETY COPING STATEMENTS



→ THIS FEELING IS UNCOMFORTABLE BUT NORMAL.

→ I DON'T NEED TO FOCUS ON THIS FEELING OR TRY TO FIGURE IT OUT.

→ I CAN CHOOSE TO DISTRACT MYSELF.

→ ANXIETY IS NOT THE BOSS. I AM IN CONTROL.

→ THIS FEELING IS A USEFUL REMINDER TO SLOW DOWN & BREATHE.

→ I ALLOW THIS FEELING TO BE HERE, KNOWING THAT IT WILL SOON PASS.

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ANXIETY & DISTRESS

→ SENSORY GROUNDING & DISTRACTION



STEP 1 TAKE A DEEP BREATH INTO YOUR BELLY & SLOWLY EXHALE.

STEP 2 PICK A COLOUR & LOOK AROUND THE SPACE YOU ARE IN.

STEP 3 MAKE A MENTAL NOTE OF EVERYTHING YOU SEE WITH THAT COLOUR.

STEP 4 IF YOUR MIND WANDERS; GENTLY BRING YOURSELF BACK TO YOUR BREATH & COLOUR SEARCH.

STEPS TO HELP YOU PROBLEM SOLVE

by WholeHearted School Counseling

STEP 1

IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM

- Ask, "What is the problem?"
- Describe what the conflict or challenge is.
- Be as specific as possible.

STEP 2

BRAINSTORM SOLUTIONS

- Come up with as many different solutions as you can.
- Think about times you have faced a similar problem and what worked before.

STEP 3

CONSIDER POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES

- For each possible solution, look at the pros and cons and ask, "Is this respectful and fair?" and "Is this safe?"

STEP 4

PICK THE BEST SOLUTION AND TRY IT OUT

- Take action and test your solution out.

STEP 5

CHECK HOW IT'S WORKING

- Ask "Is this solution working?"
- If not, try something else.



GROUND YOURSELF!

A WAY TO RECONNECT WITH YOUR BODY

GREAT TO USE FOR:

- ANXIETY
- PANIC ATTACKS
- DISSOCIATION / FEELING 'OUT OF IT' OR DISCONNECTED FROM REALITY & YOUR BODY

HOW TO:

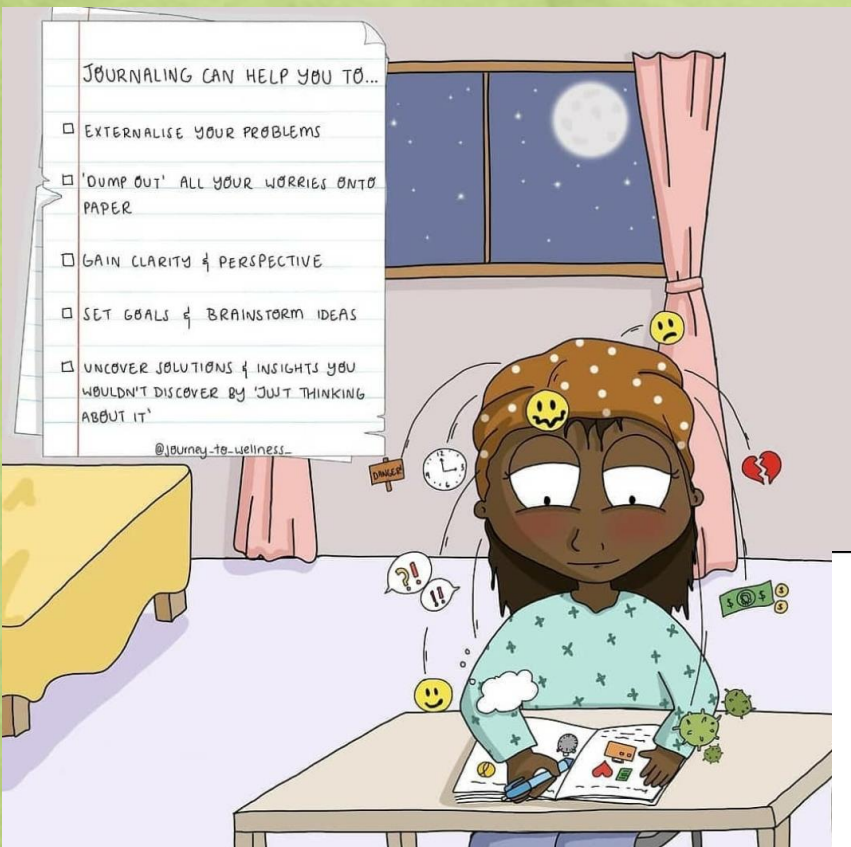
GENTLY SQUEEZE YOURSELF ON YOUR FOREARM, SHOULDER, HAND OR LEG

BREATHE SLOWLY & DEEPLY

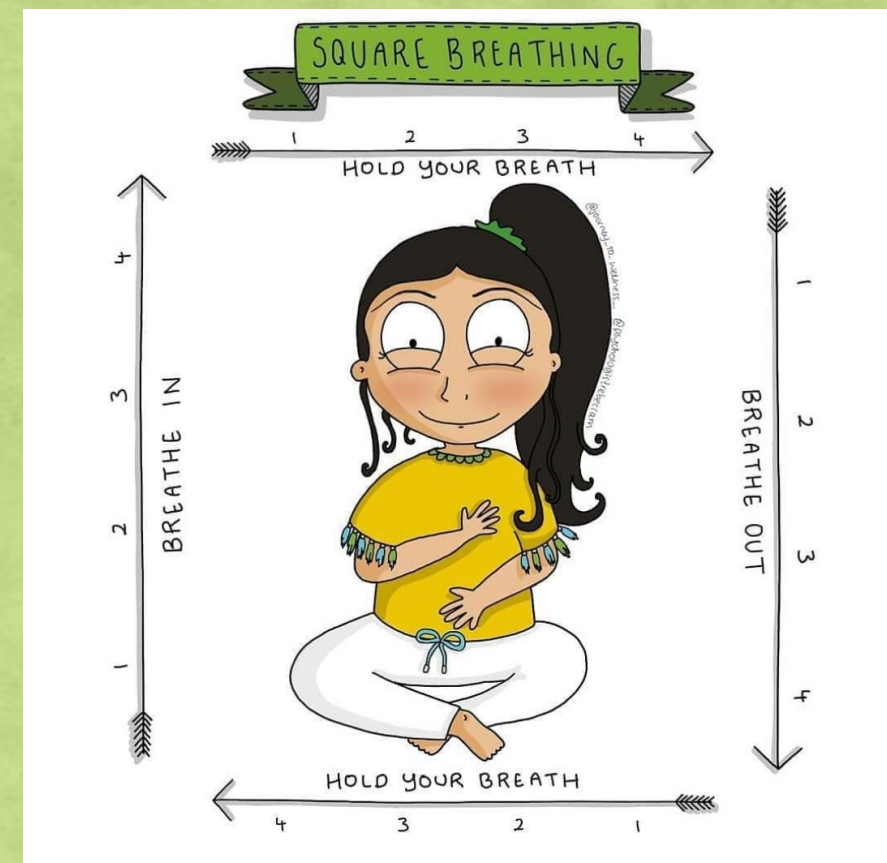
ALTER THE PRESSURE & PLACE YOU SQUEEZE

TELL YOURSELF: "I AM HERE NOW"
"I AM PRESENT"
"I AM SAFE"





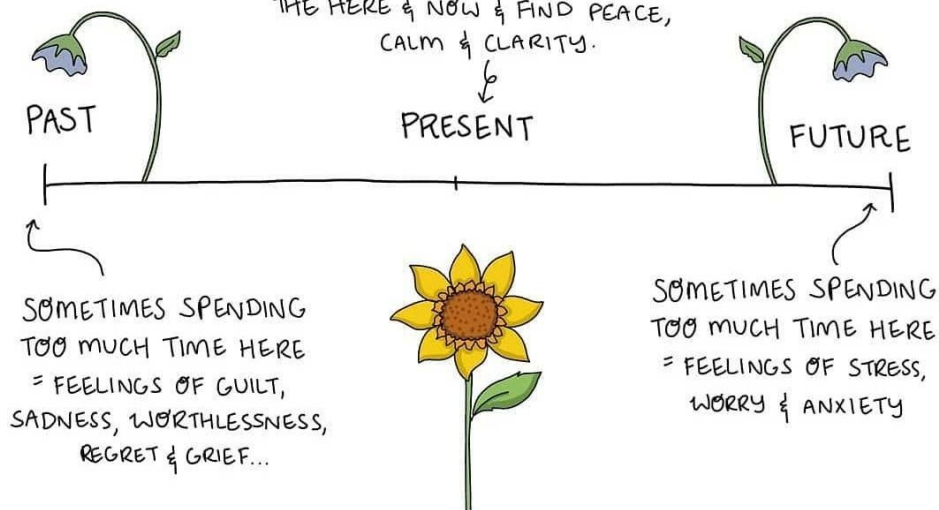
This is what's called a Narrative Therapy approach (a type of counselling).



This is such a great breathing technique to try if you're feeling stressed, overwhelmed or anxious.

MINDFULNESS

USING MINDFULNESS, GROUNDING YOURSELF WITH YOUR SENSES & RETURNING TO YOUR BREATH CAN HELP TO CONNECT YOU TO THE HERE & NOW & FIND PEACE, CALM & CLARITY.



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PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

@psychologistrebeccam

1. TAKE A FEW DEEP BREATHS TO RELAX.
2. BREATHE IN. TENSE THE MUSCLES OF YOUR FEET.
3. BREATHE OUT. RELEASE THE TENSION IN YOUR FEET.
4. BREATHE IN. TENSE YOUR CALF MUSCLES.
5. BREATHE OUT. RELEASE THE TENSION IN YOUR CALVES.
6. WORK YOUR WAY UP YOUR BODY. TENSE EACH MUSCLE GROUP. THIS INCLUDES YOUR LEGS, CHEST, FINGERS, ARMS, NECK & FACE.



WHY IS SLEEP IMPORTANT FOR YOUR MENTAL HEALTH?

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DISRUPTS HORMONES

GOOD SLEEP INCREASES RESILIENCY

POOR SLEEP MAKES IT HARD TO COPE WITH STRESS

LACK OF SLEEP = MORE IMPULSIVE, IRRITABLE & SENSITIVE

SLEEP PROBLEMS MAY BE A SYMPTOM OF DEPRESSION & ANXIETY - BUT LACK OF SLEEP MAY CONTRIBUTE TO / CAUSE THESE PROBLEMS TOO

GOOD SLEEP HELPS YOU REGULATE YOUR EMOTIONS

→ ALLOWS BODY TO REPAIR ITSELF

→ BRAIN CONSOLIDATES OUR MEMORIES & PROCESS INFORMATION

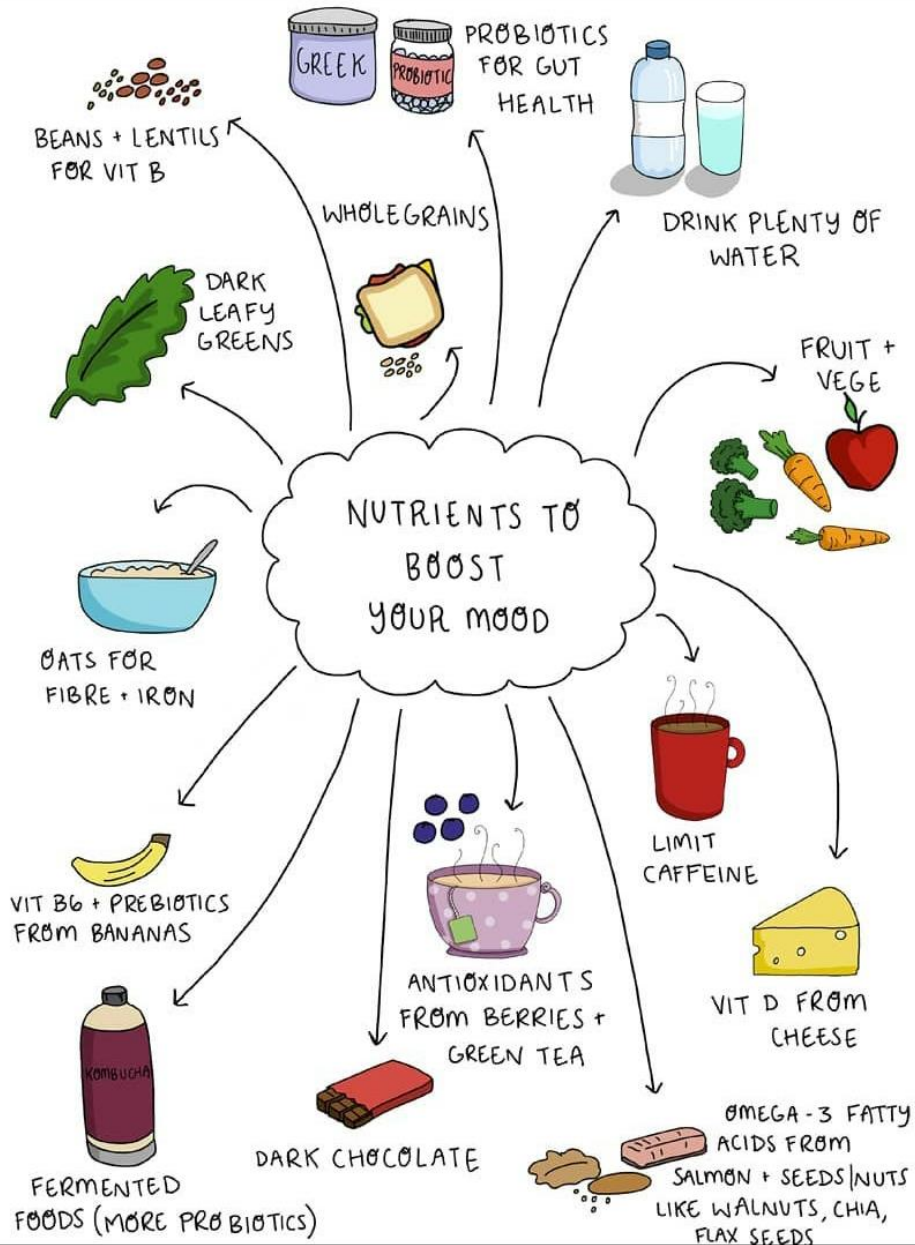
→ MISSING OUT ON SLEEP PUTS THE AMYGDALA INTO OVERDRIVE & DISRUPTS ITS COMMUNICATION WITH THE PRE-FRONTAL CORTEX

→ LACK OF SLEEP WEAKENS IMMUNE SYSTEM

→ LACK OF SLEEP INCREASES RISK OF MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

→ TIME FOR OUR BRAIN & BODY TO REST & NOT RESPOND TO EXTERNAL STIMULI





When you feel anxious and stressed, this causes an inflammatory response in the body.

These foods can be super helpful as they are a mix of anti-inflammatory foods as well as a whole bunch of things to help regulate your gut, your brain health...all the things!

It's not a magic cure, or the only piece of the puzzle – but try introducing some of these types of food into your daily diet.



FEELING FLAT, STRESSED OR OVERWHELMED?

- ① TURN OFF OR PUT AWAY ALL DEVICES
- ② STEP OUTSIDE OR OPEN A WINDOW
- ③ GROUND YOURSELF BY FOCUSING ON YOUR SENSES & BREATHE FOR 5 MINUTES

How do you stay connected?

What connections support your wellbeing?



FEELING DISTRESSED?

GET OUTSIDE IN NATURE & GO FOR A WALK, BEING MINDFUL OF YOUR SENSES & SURROUNDINGS

Do you noticed a shift in your mood when you are out in nature?



REMINDERS ...

- KEEP IN TOUCH WITH LOVED ONES
- WORK ON WAYS TO STAY CONNECTED WHEN FEELING ISOLATED
- KEEP UP WITH THERAPY VIA VIDEO/ PHONE IF YOU CAN'T GO IN-PERSON
- KNOW YOU ARE NOT ALONE

WHAT PEOPLE WHO DON'T STRUGGLE
WITH ANXIETY THINK ANXIETY IS...



WHAT ANXIETY ACTUALLY IS...



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EMPATHY IS...



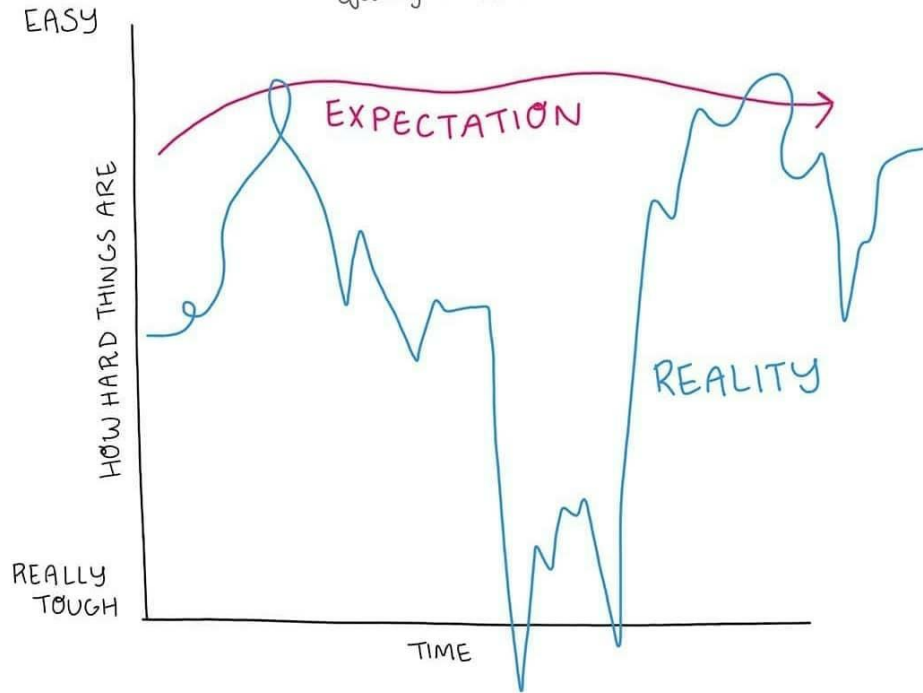
by WholeHearted School Counseling

- Putting yourself in someone else's shoes.
- Really listening without making any judgements.
- Sensing someone else's emotions that you have perhaps felt before.
- Letting someone know you understand, see, or "get" their feelings.
- Showing that you care and are there with them.
- Saying something like:
 - "What has this been like for you?"
 - "This must be so hard."
 - "Thanks for sharing with me."
 - "I'm here with you."



LIFE

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Expecting the ups and downs in life can help protect you against the disappointment of having a false expectation of a fairy tale. Highs and lows are a part of life. The lows provide us opportunity to grow our resilience and strength. The highs, in contrast, allow us to practice gratitude.

It can be easy, when faced with a low, to ask 'why me?', to feel the universe is out to get you, to feel deflated or to wallow. All of those things are okay responses! They are normal. Just be mindful of not getting stuck in those places.

In life, we were never promised a smooth ride. It would be like going on a roller coaster at a theme park and getting annoyed that it wasn't a flat train track! Ride out the twists and turns, hold on tight for the loop-de-loops, hang on tight for the falls, push through the climbs and best of all...enjoy the highs!

DAILY SELF CHECK-IN

ASK YOURSELF...

- HOW AM I FEELING RIGHT NOW?
- WHAT THOUGHTS AM I HAVING?
- HOW DOES MY BODY FEEL PHYSICALLY?
- WHAT PREDICTIONS OR ASSUMPTIONS AM I MAKING ABOUT THE DAY AHEAD?
- IS ANYTHING FROM YESTERDAY STILL IMPACTING ON ME TODAY?
- WHAT DO I NEED TO DO TO SUPPORT MY WELLBEING TODAY?

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I FEEL...



I CAN...



WHOLE HEARTED
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Remember never be afraid to reach out for support.