



Living with anxiety and depression

Anxiety and depression are very common. Around one in four people experience mental health problems like these each year. You can still lead an active, full life and achieve your goals when you have anxiety or depression.

If your symptoms are mild, there are lots of simple things you can do yourself, to help you manage. If your needs are complex, or you're unsure how to manage your situation, you might benefit from the support of an occupational therapist.

Top tips from occupational therapists

Take care of yourself

- **Eat and drink healthily**, including lots of fruit, vegetables and water.
- **Reduce or cut out alcohol** – it can make you feel worse.
- **Exercise**, including walking, will help lift your mood, increase your energy and keep you fit.
- **Sleep helps**, but if you are struggling, try avoiding stimulants (including tea and coffee), taking a bath, using blackout curtains, listening to gentle music or deep breathing exercises.

Manage your activities

- **Identify the triggers** that make you feel stressed and look for ways to reduce or manage them.
- **Identify what you already do that helps** and make them part of your daily routine.
- **Set realistic goals** by breaking each task into small steps - they will seem more manageable that way. Don't try to do too much.
- **Plan ahead** and give yourself plenty of time to carry out tasks and activities – it will help you feel more in control.

Manage school, college or work

- **Talk with someone at school, college or work** so you can review your workload. If appropriate, ask about flexible working, working from home and taking longer or more mini breaks.
- **Set boundaries** so that you can walk away from your work when it is done. Try not to think about it once you have finished for the day.

Ask for support

- **Talk with family and friends** to help them understand how you feel and how they could support you.
- **Use social media** to stay in touch with friends and family, but be careful that it doesn't 'feed' any negative moods you may be experiencing.
- **Get advice** and support by using online resources and joining support groups. Sharing ideas and experiences with other people can help.

Occupational therapy

helping people to live, not exist



Occupational therapists provide practical support to help you do the activities that matter to you. They will consider all of your needs – physical, psychological, social and environmental. Their support can make a real difference giving a renewed sense of purpose, opening up new horizons, and changing the way you feel about the future.

Support from an occupational therapist

An occupational therapist will consider your strengths, abilities and health care needs. They will find out what you want and need to be able to do and then consider if your environment (home, workplace, school, etc.) supports or hinders your ability to do those things. They can then find ways to make life easier and support you to manage daily tasks and activities. This might include support with self-care, household chores, getting out and about, finding or staying in work or education, or taking part in social and leisure activities.

Arranging to see an occupational therapist

Speak with your GP or a health and social care professional - they might be able to arrange for you to see an occupational therapist. Before you speak with anyone, you might find it helpful to spend some time writing down the things you're worried about or struggle with; it will help you feel more prepared.

If you see an occupational therapist on the NHS, or through education or social services, you will not have to pay. Alternatively, you could consider contacting a local independent occupational therapist who works outside the NHS and social care services. You will need to pay for their services. You, or a friend or carer, can find contact details of independent occupational therapists online at www.rcotss-ip.org.uk/find.

Occupation matters

rcot.co.uk

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