

# Managing Anxiety - Information Sheet for adults and teenagers

Anxiety is a common and recurring theme amongst people with dyspraxia /DCD – a Dyspraxia Foundation survey in 2014 found that 40% of people with dyspraxia/DCD aged 13-19 years felt anxious 'all the time'. Anxiety is the term we use to describe feelings of unease, fear or worry. It is a normal response to a frightening or unknown situation such as attending a job interview or preparing for exams. Feelings of anxiety can range from feeling slightly nervous to something completely debilitating unless it is recognised and managed appropriately.

It is important to know that anxiety is a common issue and there is likely to be someone else that you know, or who you study or work with that also has issues.

We will all act and react differently to stressful situations but we hope that some of the following tips will be of use.

## Eat a healthy diet

 Avoid stimulants such as coffee, cigarettes and energy drinks as these disrupt your sleep and make your heart beat faster, making it harder for you to control your anxious feelings.

#### Find peace

• Listening to music, going for a swim, a walk in the fresh air, yoga, Tai chi, mindfulness...whatever works for you.

#### **Exercise**

- Regular exercise can really help to boost your mood and help you to deal with your unwanted feelings. Find a physical activity that raises your heart rate and makes you breath faster and that you enjoy. Make the time to do this activity several times a week.
- More information about 'getting active for mental wellbeing' can be found here: <a href="http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/mental-benefits-of-exercise.aspx">http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/mental-benefits-of-exercise.aspx</a>

#### Sleep well

A good night's sleep is important for our mental health and well-being. A
podcast explaining how you can get better sleep can be found here:
 <a href="http://www.nhs.uk/Video/Pages/sleep-problems-podcast.aspx">http://www.nhs.uk/Video/Pages/sleep-problems-podcast.aspx</a>

Updated May 2016 Anxiety Factsheet Page 1

## **Know the triggers**

- Keeping a diary may help you to establish common things which trigger your anxious feelings. You can then begin to deal with them or avoid them. Write down when you have managed something successfully and underline it to remind yourself that you CAN do it.
- People with dyspraxia/DCD often worry about things that might happen. One
  way to deal with this is to think about the worst thing that might happen if the
  worst case scenario isn't really so bad then you can decide it's not worth
  worrying about. Another strategy is to plan a script to help you make decisions
  and respond appropriately in situations that you find stressful, for example
  answering the phone, asking for help at a train station and staring a
  conversation.

## **Distract yourself**

 When you begin to feel anxious try doing something like watch a TV programme, mow the lawn or draw or write something. Take your mind away from your anxious thoughts.

## Don't manage on your own

- We all feel anxious at times and it is good to share your feelings with someone who may well understand and be able to help you.
- Talk to a trusted friend or family member or colleague and tell them how you feel. Sharing can be a relief in itself.

### **Prioritize yourself**

It's important to recognise that sometimes you need to take time out to focus
on your own well-being. This might mean withdrawing temporarily from social
media if it makes you feel overwhelmed and drained. Don't withdraw from all
'real life' social contact however, as being with people who understand you
can help.

#### Join a support group

 There are some links to useful organisations at the bottom of the page or consider a group affiliated to the Dyspraxia Foundation where you can meet people who can make you feel less alone with your difficulties.

#### Talk to your GP

 It's OK to admit that everything is not OK. Your GP will be able to offer treatments such as talking therapies or refer you to a specialist.

#### Accept your anxiety

Know that your anxiety will pass. It will come and go. Don't let it define you.

## People & organisations that can help

<u>www.mind.org.uk</u> - For advice and support re all mental health issues (including anxiety)

<u>www.anxietyuk.org.uk/</u> - Lots of excellent information, advice and support available here.

http://www.mindful.org/mindfulness-practice/mindfulness-the-basics - Lots of us think about trying mindfulness meditation, but it can be hard to know where to begin. This site will show you how to start, feel better, reduce your stress, and enjoy your life a little more.

http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cognitive-behavioural-therapy/pages/introduction.aspx - For information RE CBT (Cognitive behavioural therapy.)

http://thinkoutsideofthecardboardbox.blogspot.co.uk/2014/01/dyspraxia-anxiety-and-me.html - a blog in which the author describes how anxiety affects her and the strategies she uses to manage these feelings

Further information available from:

Dyspraxia Foundation, 8 West Alley Hitchin Herts SG5 1EG

Helpline Tel: 01462 454986

Admin Tel: 01462 455016

Fax: 01462 455052

Web: www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk

© Dyspraxia Foundation

Every effort has been made to verify the accuracy of items in DF Fact Sheets, however users are urged to check independently on matters of specific interest. The Dyspraxia Foundation encourages the reproduction and distribution of this fact sheet. If portions of the text are cited, appropriate reference must be made. Fact sheets may not be reprinted for the purpose of resale.

Hadatadaa 2016 A. Sat Fastalasat Day 2

Registered Charity No 1058352 A Company limited by guarantee registered in England No 3256733