

OVERRIDING ANXIETY

We appreciate that anxiety is important to our survival. It can also help us to understand ourselves and our relationships. So to regulate the intensity of anxiety when it is limiting your quality of life, we apply these ideas:

- We are not working for you to get rid of it.
- We understand that a degree of anxiety may be appropriate, as it can signal the issues that need addressing in yourself and your relationships, e.g. your sense of loneliness or some negative interactions.
- You learn to distinguish anxious thoughts from worry by observing your internal experience – what’s happening to/in you:
 1. Sensations in the body,
 2. Intensity in thinking: are they absolute, rigid, serious, increasing in pace? (potentially leading to overwhelm)
 3. Intensity in feelings: do you feel out of control, unable to distract yourself or question your ideas in the moment? You feel consumed or carried away by your thought content.
 4. Urgency: do you feel the urge to act on your anxious thoughts? You may feel the impulse to get reassurance from other people as if somebody has to say something to calm you down. You may find that no one can say something good enough or that once one question is answered, a few more arise – the mind is on a highway with no exit.
 - **The key question to assist yourself in recognising the anxiety arising is: Are my thoughts**
 - A) true and I am in real danger; or**
 - B) irrational and causing my symptoms of anxiety?**

The sooner you ask this question and choose B, the easier to get the symptoms under control. Practice it as often as you can remember.
- Differently from worry, you may feel unable to postpone the thinking, think clearly and rationally. **Therefore, you focus on calming down and relaxing (aware presence, mindfulness, breathing) or a positive distraction.**
- If anxiety is taking over your focus and overall attention in life, ie you live in our head, fearful of what might happen, if... and you feel unable (or not even wanting) to engage in normal activities, we could say, your life is out of balance. Therefore, it is important besides learning to manage anxiety symptoms, to understand what anxiety is replacing in your life right now.
- In therapy, we reexamine your life and relationships with yourself and others before anxiety became this problem. We recover your strengths, what gives you a sense of purpose, meaning and joy. Our direction in therapy is your fulfilling life. Our focus is for you to regain your balance so that you can enjoy your life again. This focus on a bigger picture and on what you want is **overriding anxiety**.