

Practical tools for anxiety management in your daily work

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Why might you be feeling more anxious at the moment?



"It turns out it wasn't the giant asteroid that killed the dinosaurs. It was stress about the giant asteroid that killed the dinosaurs."



Current context = perfect soil for anxiety growth

Anxiety can be caused by a multitude of factors, but these are some situations that we know increase the likelihood of people feeling anxious and worrying a lot:

- **Ambiguous** – situations that are open to different interpretations.
- **Novel and new situation**– so we don't have any experience to fall back on.
- **Unpredictable situation**– unclear how things will turn out.

All of these factors have been in play in recent months due to COVID-19 and against a background of bad summer bushfires.



The added anxiety load

For:

- People with pre-existing anxiety and depression
- Healthcare workers
- People who are placed in quarantine or lengthy isolation
- The casualised or unemployed workforce

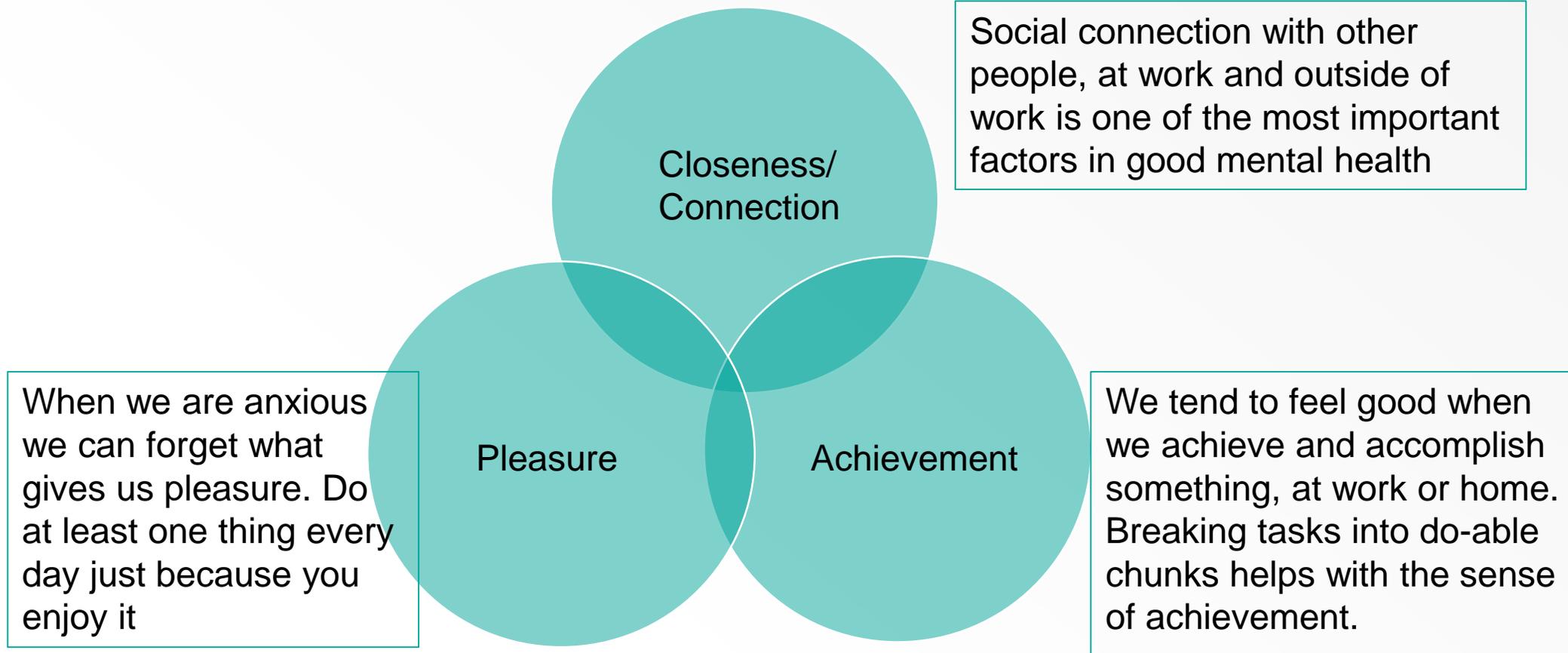


How would I know that I am feeling anxious?

Physical symptoms	Psychological Symptoms	Behavioural Symptoms
Hot/cold flushes Racing heart Tightening of chest Feeling wound up/on edge Butterflies in the stomach Upset stomach Dizziness Dry mouth Sweaty palms Panic attacks	“what if...” thinking Thoughts of impending doom Poor concentration Mind going blank Obsessive thinking Catastrophising Worry Sleep problems	Avoidance Procrastination Indecision Social withdrawal Obsessive slowness



Simple strategy #1: Keeping Balance in your life



Simple strategy #2: Physical Relaxation

Breathing strategies

Cues to check in with your physical state regularly, for example:

- Getting up and stretching every 30min
- Noticing you are tense and lowering your shoulders
- Always doing breathing exercises when in a lift etc.

Relaxation exercises: tensing and relaxing muscle groups – targeted or going through the whole body

Changing your physical state: e.g., moving around, having a cold or hot drink, walking around the block at lunch time.



Simple strategy #3: Mental Relaxation

Bringing yourself into the moment: spend a couple of minutes going through your 5 senses and describe to yourself what you can see, hear, smell, taste and touch

Habit releasers: slightly change the way you do a task to take it off autopilot and allow your mind to focus on it

Use a mindfulness app

Listen to music

Create small rituals to look forward to e.g., on your commute to and from work and remind yourself of them during the day

Avoid avoiding: avoidance of tasks you are anxious about is not your friend!
Break down tasks that you are anxious about into small, manageable tasks, or reach out for support with these tasks



Simple strategy #4: Problem-solving

Ask yourself whether what you are anxious about is an **actual problem** that needs problem-solving. If it is, and you are not able to solve it, work out **what you need to solve it** and **who can help you**

Ask yourself whether what you are anxious about is a **hypothetical** where further thinking is not going to give you more clarity. If it is, **acknowledge to yourself** that you are anxious and go to simple strategy #2 and #3 above to help you manage it



Next Steps

'Call a Psychologist'

- Provided by Monash Health psychologists
- A wellbeing rather than a clinical service

EAP

- External providers
- 1-4 sessions

Private psychology/ psychiatry

- If treatment is indicated, a referral and assistance in connecting to the right private provider(s) will be given through Call a Psychologist

- Confidentiality & Privacy
- Caring consideration of your circumstance (home and work)

