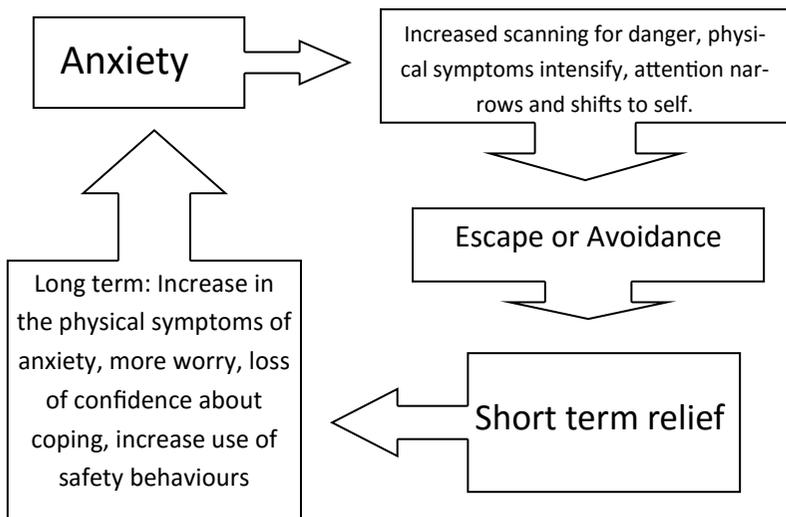


The Vicious Cycle of Anxiety



The essence of anxiety is worrying about some potential threat. It is trying to cope with a future event that you think will be negative. You do this by more attention to possible signs of threat, and looking internally to see whether you will be able to cope with that threat. When you notice your anxious symptoms, you think you can't cope with the situation and therefore become more anxious. This is the start of the vicious cycle of anxiety.



How Safety Behaviours Contribute to Anxiety

In addition to avoidance, many people use safety behaviours or subtle avoidance to help cope with anxiety. These may include relying on medication, the security of your mobile phone, always having an exit plan for potentially anxious situations, or making sure you always have someone with you.

These safety behaviours also play a part in the vicious cycle of anxiety. When you become dependent on them and do not learn that emotion is not dangerous. You don't learn that distressing emotions tend to come down naturally. Imagine how stressing it would be if the safety behaviours were not available to you.

Reversing the Cycle

You can turn the vicious cycle around to create a positive cycle that will help you overcome anxiety. One important step is gradually confronting feared situations, leading to an improved sense of confidence helping to reduce anxiety. Grade exposure refers to tackling your fears as an alternative to 'jumping in at the deep end' and trying to tackle your biggest fear first.

This approach allows you to build your confidence slowly, to use other skills you have learned, to get used to the situations, to challenge your fears about each situational exposure exercise.

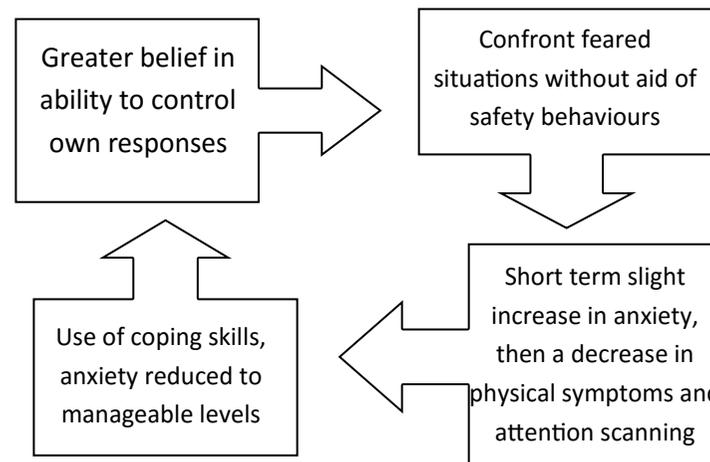
By doing this in a structured and repeated way, you have a good chance of reducing your anxiety about those situations.

How Avoidance Contributes to Anxiety

If you feel anxious or anticipate feeling anxious, you will respond by doing things to reduce your anxiety. People try and achieve this by avoiding the feared situation altogether. This decreases the anxiety in the short term however worsens it in the long term.

For example, when you avoid going to the supermarket because that is where you experience fear results in you avoiding the distress associated with supermarkets. In the long term you become even more unwilling to confront anxiety. You continue to believe that emotion is dangerous and should be avoided at all costs. You continue scanning your environment for signals of danger and signals of danger and signals of safety. In this way your anxiety may increase and generalise to other situations.

Reversing the Vicious Cycle of Anxiety



01629 812710

admin@dracs.org.uk

Our office is open from 9am to 5pm

To find out more visit www.dracs.org.uk