



Understanding anxiety

What it is, what it feels like and what helps

Anxiety is part of your body's alarm system. It helps you notice danger and get ready to respond. Feeling anxious now and then is normal, and often passes once the situation does.

When it becomes a problem

Anxiety is more than ordinary worry or stress. It may be a problem when anxious feelings do not go away, come up without a clear reason, or make it hard to cope with day-to-day life.

What it can feel like

In your body: a racing heart, a tight chest, dizziness, sweating, trembling or an unsettled stomach.

In your thoughts: constant worry, expecting the worst, or finding it hard to switch off.

In what you do: avoiding things, sleeping badly, or feeling restless and snappy.

In dental work

Worries about mistakes, complaints, running late and patients' reactions are common across the whole team. Many people carry these quietly.

Feeling anxious does not mean you are weak or not good at your job. It means your alarm system is working hard.

What can help

- Say it out loud to someone you trust. Worry often shrinks when it is shared.
- Slow your breathing for a minute, with a long, slow breath out.
- Keep to a routine for sleep, meals and movement.
- Try not to avoid everything that makes you anxious. Small steps help.
- Talk to a counsellor, psychologist or doctor. Anxiety is common and treatable.

When to get help

If anxiety is there most days for weeks, or it stops you doing things you want or need to do, it is time to talk to a professional.

If you need support

Lifeline	13 11 14	24-hour crisis support
Beyond Blue	1300 22 4636	support by phone and online
Dental Practitioner Support	1800 377 700	registered practitioners; free, confidential, 24/7
In an emergency, call 000		

Look after yourself, and each other.

General information. For more on anxiety, see Beyond Blue (beyondblue.org.au).