ANXIETY DIARY

A Mind & Meaning Therapy Resource

Anxiety is a normal part of being human. It's your body's alarm system, and it's there to keep you safe. Sometimes, though, it switches on when there's no real danger, or it hangs around long after it's needed. That's when it can start to feel like a problem.

This diary is a simple way to get to know your anxiety a little better. The aim isn't to fight it or make it go away; it's just to notice when it appears, how strong it gets and what's going on in your mind or in life at the time. Over a week or two, patterns often start to appear, and those patterns give you something useful to work with.

HOW TO USE THIS DIARY

STEP 1: NOTICE IT

When you notice that anxiety has appeared and it has grabbed your attention, use this as a reminder to put it in your diary. Think of an anxiety trigger as a diary trigger.

STEP 2: WRITE IT DOWN

Write down the date and time, and what thoughts were going through your mind. Try to record them as honestly as you can, even if they seem extreme or embarrassing.

STEP 3: RATE THE ANXIETY LEVEL

Give the strongest point of your anxiety a number from 1 to 10, where 1 is background, but noticeable, and 10 is feelings of panic. Be honest; please don't play it down.

STEP 4: ADD THE CONTEXT

If you can pinpoint a specific trigger, write it down. If not, note what you were doing or what was happening at the time. Both are just as useful.

Try to fill it in while your anxiety is still happening, or as soon as it's passed. If you miss a few or a lot, that's OK. A handful of entries is far more useful than none, and there's no way of getting this wrong.

NOTING IT DOWN MIGHT MAKE YOU FEEL LIKE YOUR ANXIETY IS OUT OF CONTROL

Writing all of your anxieties down can feel like giving them more attention, and that your anxiety is even worse than you thought. This is completely normal and part of the process. In fact, writing it down can sometimes remove it from your mind and make you feel less anxious.

Keeping a diary like this is a method used in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) to help people spot the links between situations, thoughts and feelings.

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When you notice that anxiety has appeared and hasn't ended on its own, write it down here. Note when it happened, how strong the peak was, what thoughts were going through your mind, and any trigger or context you can think of.

ANXIETY LEVEL (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (10) 1 = background, but noticeable · 10 = feelings of panic

DATE AND TIME	ANXIETY LEVEL (1-10)	ANXIOUS THOUGHTS	TRIGGER / CONTEXT

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OPTIONAL

WHAT DO I NOTICE?

This part is optional. If you are working with a therapist, this might be something you complete in a therapy session, rather than on your own. Once you've kept your diary for a week or two, read back over it and see what you notice. You're looking for patterns: when anxiety tends to arrive, what it's saying to you and any repetitive thoughts that come up.

PATTERNS I NOTICE

When does my anxiety tend to show up? Are there times of day, places, people or situations that come up again and again? Which entries in my diary made me most anxious?

THOUGHTS THAT KEEP COMING BACK

Are there worries or 'what ifs' I see more than once?