

WHAT ARE ANXIETY TRIGGERS?

Use the following pages to help you recognise and cope with your anxiety triggers

What is an anxiety trigger?

An anxiety trigger is anything that causes your anxiety to build or get worse. If you are trying to look after yourself and manage your anxiety, identifying things that make your anxiety worse is a good way to start.

When you identify triggers, you can start finding ways to avoid or cope with them.

An anxiety trigger can feel like a sudden change in your mood after something happens. You can start to worry or dread certain triggers because you know they will make your anxiety worse. But that doesn't mean we need to avoid them, sometimes we just need to see them differently.

Why do they happen?

In our article about normalising anxiety, we discuss the human fight or flight response.

Essentially, anxiety is your brain's way of keeping you safe. If it feels like you're in danger, it will produce certain hormones to help protect us from this threat, such as making us feel more alert.

But our brains aren't always good at recognising what is and isn't dangerous in this day and age.

So, our anxiety can build for reasons we can't control and this can affect our ability to live a healthy and normal life.

Thinking or talking about our anxiety can be extremely difficult. This worksheet will ask you questions which may be tough to answer. Take things at your own pace and speak to a trusted adult or helpline if you are feeling overwhelmed.

EXAMPLE QUESTIONS TO IDENTIFY ANXIETY TRIGGERS

1. Can you think of any times in your life when your anxiety felt really bad? Describe the situation.

2. How did you feel during those situations?

3. What was it about the situation you were in that made you scared, worried or anxious?

Answering the questions above can help you to recognise which situations make you feel anxious and what triggers your anxiety.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Now that you have thought about what your anxiety triggers are, let's look at how we can manage them.

1. What triggered me?

Example: going to my new school for the first time.

2. What can I do to help manage my anxiety?

Example: I can speak to my parent or guardian. I can ask the school for support. I can take deep breaths.

1. What triggered me?

2. What can I do to help manage my anxiety?

1. What triggered me?

2. What can I do to help manage my anxiety?

Common anxiety triggers

1. Having to speak in front of people (like giving a presentation at school)
2. Social situations (such as going out with friends)
3. Exams or tests
4. When people expect things of you
5. Trying something new
6. Being stressed about something
7. Overthinking
8. People saying negative things about you
9. Having too much to do.

Common Armed Forces anxiety triggers

1. Moving to a new place
2. Starting at a new school
3. Trying to make friends in your new location
4. Introducing yourself to new classmates and teachers
5. Catching up with school work
6. Getting used to a new place you live
7. Your parent being deployed or travelling somewhere away from you
8. Explaining your lifestyle.

Anxiety looks different for everyone and that's okay. We all have things that make us anxious and if we talk about them and find ways that help us cope, then we can make things less overwhelming.

