

Understanding Anxiety

Why your mind detects danger and how to change the patterns that keep anxiety going

MODULE 01 / 13



A few things before you begin

This workbook is designed to be completed on a computer, tablet or phone. You can type directly into the cream response fields throughout the workbook.

1**SAVE A COPY FIRST**

Save the PDF to your device before you begin. This helps ensure you are working in your own copy rather than a temporary browser preview.

2**TYPE DIRECTLY INTO THE FIELDS**

The larger response areas accept multiple lines of text. Write directly into the cream fields and save the file as you work.

3**SAVE AS YOU WORK**

Use your PDF app's normal Save or Save As function regularly.

4**YOUR RESPONSES STAY IN YOUR COPY**

Nothing in this workbook is submitted automatically. If you want to share your responses, you will need to send or show someone your saved PDF.

PHONE OR TABLET?

For the most reliable experience, open the saved file in a PDF app that supports fillable forms. Some browser previews allow typing but may not reliably retain entries after you close them.

Anxiety is a protection system.

Anxiety can feel as though something is wrong with the situation, with your body, or with you. But anxiety is fundamentally protective. Your brain and body are designed to notice possible danger and prepare you to respond.

The difficulty is that the system responds to perceived threat, not only to danger that is happening now. Thoughts, memories, sensations and uncertainty can all be interpreted as signs that something might be wrong.

ANXIETY IS AN ALARM

An alarm can be useful and still become too sensitive.

What stands out to you about this?

How the alarm system works

Anxiety usually follows a sequence. Seeing the sequence helps you understand why the feeling can become so convincing and why certain responses keep it going.

PERCEIVED THREAT

Something is noticed and interpreted as possible danger.

ACTIVATION

Your body prepares to protect you: heart rate, breathing, muscle tension and attention can all change.

PROTECTIVE RESPONSE

You may avoid, check, seek reassurance, prepare, control or escape.

RELIEF

Anxiety drops. That relief can teach the brain that the protective response was necessary.

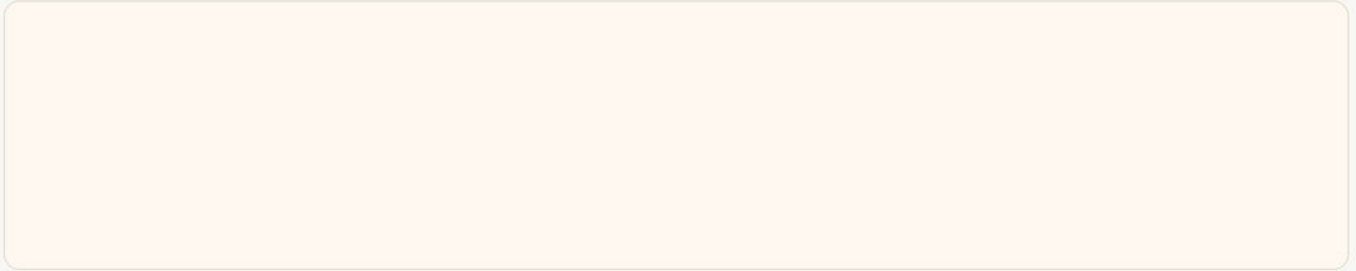
The useful question

What is my alarm trying to protect me from right now?

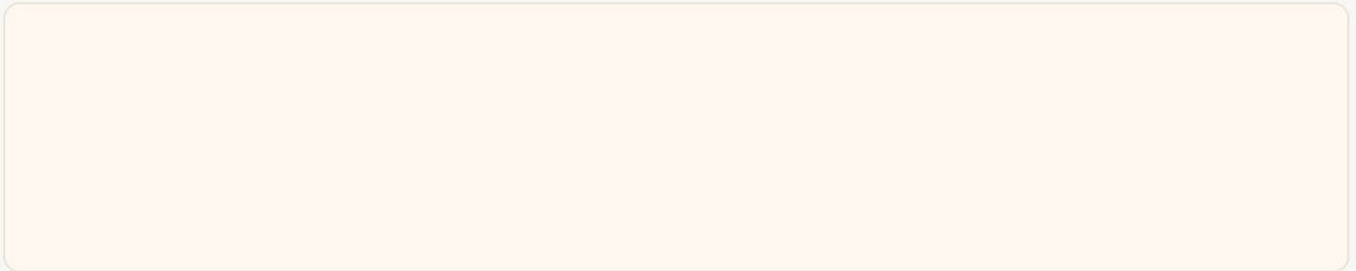
What does anxiety look like for you?

Anxiety is easier to work with when you can recognise your own version of it. Think about what you notice in your body, your thoughts and your behaviour.

What do you notice in your body when anxiety rises?



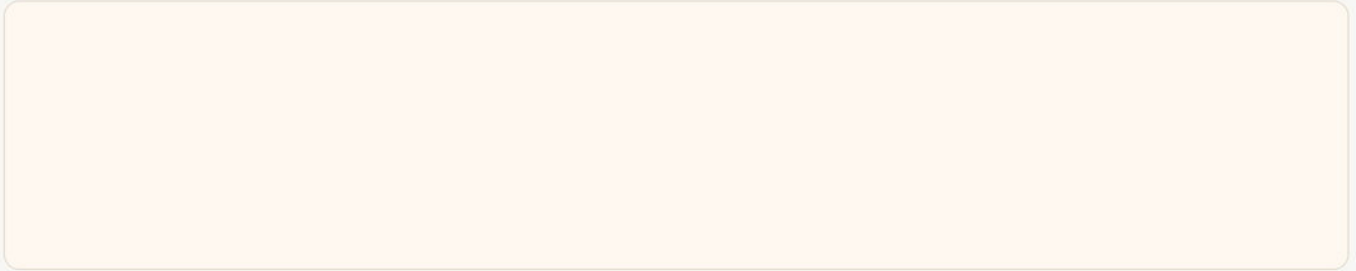
What thoughts or predictions tend to show up?



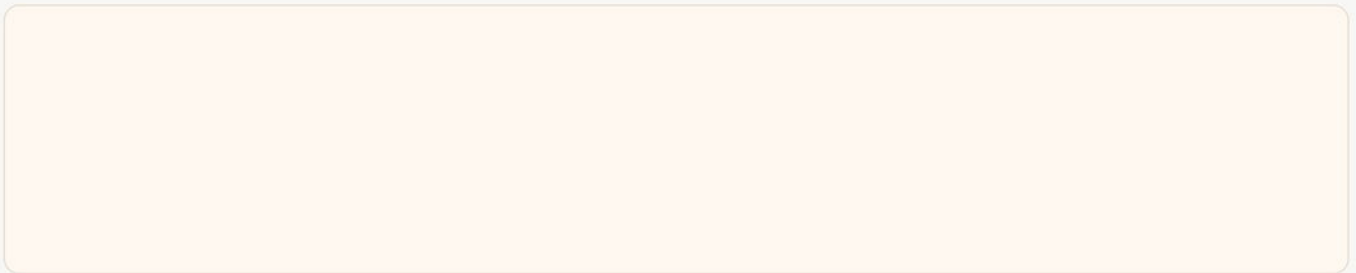
What do you want from this work?

Take a moment to consider what you hope will be different by the end of these modules. Try to describe changes you could notice in everyday life.

What would you like anxiety to interfere with less?



What would you like to be doing more freely?



A meaningful improvement

Change is easier to recognise when the goal is concrete. Rather than aiming to never feel anxious, choose something anxiety currently makes harder and describe what improvement would look like.

1**1**

Choose one situation anxiety affects.

2**2**

Describe what you currently do when anxiety appears.

3**3**

Describe one small way you would like to respond differently.

One small improvement I would notice this week:

What to take from Module 1

You do not need to eliminate anxiety before you can begin changing your relationship with it.

PROTECTION

Anxiety is trying to protect you.

PERCEPTION

The alarm responds to what your mind detects as dangerous, not only to objective danger.

LEARNING

Protective responses can teach the alarm what to fear next time.

CHOICE

Understanding the pattern creates more room to choose how you respond.

NEXT

Module 2 looks more closely at your threat system and the different ways it prepares you to protect yourself.

Your Threat System

Understanding how your mind and body respond when something feels unsafe

MODULE 02 / 13



Your threat system is designed to act quickly

Your threat system developed to help you respond before there is time for careful analysis. When something appears threatening, attention narrows and the body prepares for action.

This speed is useful when danger is real. It can become exhausting when the system begins reacting strongly to situations that are uncomfortable, uncertain or only potentially dangerous.

FAST DOES NOT MEAN ACCURATE

A quick alarm is designed to protect first and analyse later.

What stands out to you about this?

The body joins the alarm

Physical symptoms are part of the protective response. They can feel alarming, but many are understandable changes produced by a body preparing to act.

HEART

Heart rate may increase to move blood and oxygen more quickly.

BREATHING

Breathing may become faster or shallower.

MUSCLES

Muscles may tighten in preparation for movement.

ATTENTION

Your attention may narrow toward signs of danger and away from neutral information.

A helpful reframe

Symptoms can be uncomfortable without being evidence that something dangerous is happening.

Fight, flight, freeze and appease

Protection can take several forms. You may recognise more than one, and the response can change depending on the situation.

FIGHT

Push back, argue, become irritable, control, challenge or try to overpower the problem.

FLIGHT

Leave, avoid, distract, stay busy, postpone or create distance from what feels threatening.

FREEZE

Go blank, feel stuck, become indecisive, disconnect or struggle to act.

APPEASE

Agree, accommodate, over explain, seek approval or prioritise another person's comfort to reduce threat.

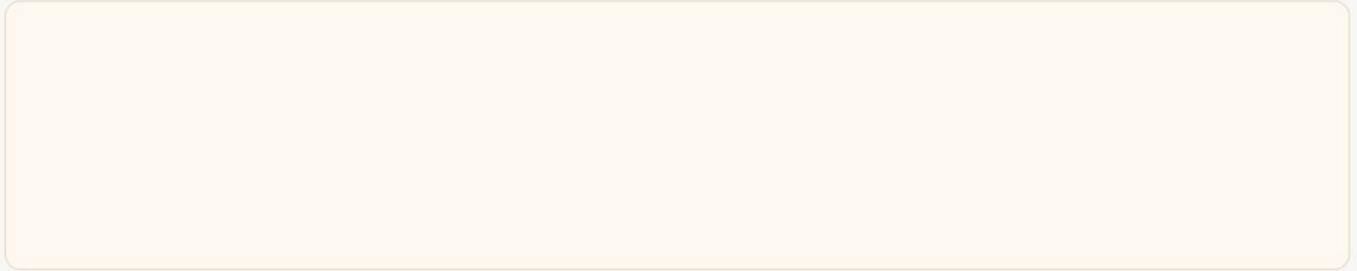
None of these responses is a character flaw.

They are patterns of protection. The question is whether they fit the situation you are in now.

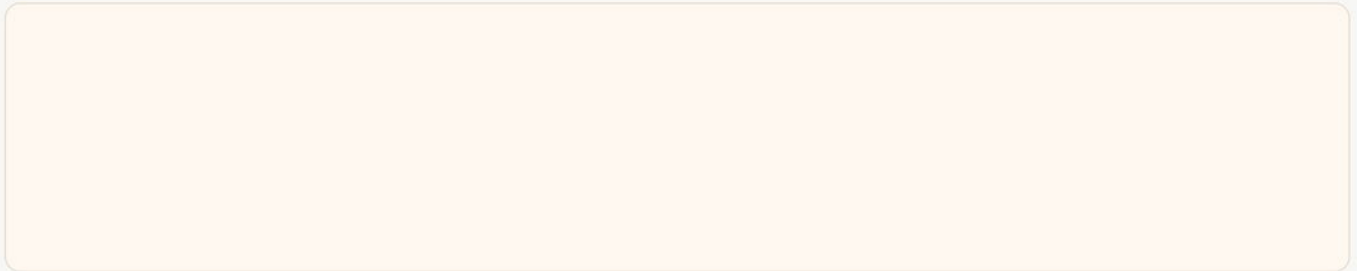
What activates your threat system?

Triggers can be obvious, such as conflict or crowds, or subtle, such as a sensation, a memory, a look from someone else or the possibility of making a mistake.

Situations, sensations or thoughts that often trigger my alarm:



What does my mind seem to think those triggers mean?



Your early warning signs

Catching the alarm earlier gives you more choice. Look for the first signs that appear before anxiety becomes intense.

BODY

What changes first in your body?

THOUGHTS

What prediction appears first?

EMOTIONS

What feeling becomes noticeable?

URGES

What do you immediately want to do to feel safer?

My earliest warning sign is:

Notice the alarm before you obey it

The aim this week is not to stop the threat response. It is to practise identifying it while it is happening.

1

1
Pause when you notice the first signs.

2

2
Name the response: "My threat system is active."

3

3
Ask what it is predicting and what it wants you to do.

4

4
Delay the protective response for a moment if it is safe to do so.

One moment I noticed my threat system this week:

WORKBOOK SERIES

Recognising Your Anxiety Patterns

Learning to see the repeating sequence that keeps anxiety going

MODULE 03 / 13



Anxiety usually follows a pattern

Anxious moments can feel random when you are inside them, but repeated episodes often contain the same ingredients: a trigger, a prediction, a protective response and a consequence.

The details change from situation to situation. The underlying sequence often changes much less. Learning to see that sequence is one of the most useful skills in this workbook.

PATTERNS CREATE PREDICTABILITY

When you can see the pattern, anxiety becomes something you can study rather than simply endure.

What stands out to you about this?

The pattern underneath the anxiety

Across different situations, four parts of the sequence are especially useful to notice.

TRIGGER

Something happens internally or externally.

THREAT PREDICTION

Your mind decides what the situation could mean or what might happen.

PROTECTIVE RESPONSE

You avoid, check, control, prepare, distract, escape or seek reassurance.

SHORT-TERM RELIEF

Anxiety drops, which can make the protective response feel necessary next time.

The useful question is: what keeps repeating?

Look for the same prediction or protective response appearing in different situations.

Map a recent anxious moment

Choose a recent situation where anxiety became noticeable. Work through the sequence slowly rather than trying to explain everything at once.

What triggered the anxiety?

What did your mind predict would happen?

What did you do to feel safer?

What tends to repeat?

Patterns become clearer when you compare more than one anxious moment.

TRIGGERS

Do similar situations, sensations or themes set off your alarm?

PREDICTIONS

Do you repeatedly predict rejection, failure, embarrassment, illness, loss of control or another threat?

RESPONSES

Do you tend to avoid, check, prepare, seek reassurance or overthink?

RELIEF

What gives you immediate relief, even if the anxiety later returns?

A pattern I keep seeing is:

Give your pattern a simple description

A short description can help you recognise the pattern while it is happening rather than only afterwards.

When I notice...

my mind predicts...

so I tend to...

What do you notice when you read it back?

Catch the pattern earlier

This week, the goal is not to stop anxiety. It is to notice the sequence sooner. Each time you recognise the pattern while it is happening, you create a little more space between the alarm and your response.

1**ASK**

What triggered me?

2**ASK**

What is my mind predicting?

3**ASK**

What am I about to do to feel safer?

4**ASK**

Have I seen this pattern before?

One moment I recognised the pattern:

Avoidance and Escape

Why relief can keep anxiety going and how to begin approaching what matters

MODULE 04 / 13



Avoidance works - at first.

When something feels threatening, stepping away can bring immediate relief. That relief is real. The problem is what the brain may learn from it.

If anxiety drops every time you escape, your threat system can conclude that leaving prevented something bad from happening. The situation stays untested, so the fear has little opportunity to change.

RELIEF CAN REINFORCE FEAR

Feeling better immediately does not always mean the protective response was necessary.

What stands out to you about this?

Avoidance can be obvious or subtle

Sometimes avoidance means not going. Sometimes it means going, but only if you can control enough of the situation to feel safe.

ESCAPE

Leaving early, cancelling, changing route or ending the situation.

DISTRACTION

Staying busy, scrolling, overworking or focusing elsewhere to avoid internal discomfort.

REASSURANCE

Repeatedly checking, asking others, researching or seeking certainty.

SAFETY BEHAVIOURS

Only coping if a particular person, object, ritual or exit plan is available.

MENTAL AVOIDANCE

Suppressing thoughts, pushing feelings away or trying not to remember.

A useful question

Does this strategy help me stay engaged with life, or does it mainly help me get away from discomfort?

What happens when you avoid?

Choose one recent situation where anxiety led you to avoid, escape or make yourself safer.

What did you expect might happen?

What did you avoid, escape from or change?

What relief did you get immediately?

What does avoidance cost?

Avoidance often solves the immediate problem of discomfort. The longer-term cost can be harder to see.

FREEDOM

Places, activities or choices gradually become harder to approach.

CONFIDENCE

You get fewer chances to discover that you can cope.

CERTAINTY

The need to feel completely sure can grow rather than settle.

CONNECTION

Anxiety may begin shaping relationships, work or family life.

Where has anxiety made your world smaller?

Your avoidance map

You do not need to remove every avoidance behaviour at once. Start by understanding the function it serves.

A situation I tend to avoid:

What I do to get relief:

What the short-term relief may be teaching my anxiety:

Approach in small, workable steps

The alternative to avoidance is not forcing yourself into the hardest situation. It is choosing a manageable step that gives your brain a chance to learn something new.

1

1
Choose one avoided situation that matters to you.

2

2
Make the step small enough that you are willing to try it.

3

3
Stay long enough to notice what happens rather than leaving at the first rise in anxiety.

4

4
Afterwards, compare what you predicted with what actually happened.

One small step toward rather than away:

Working With Anxious Thoughts

Learning to question threat predictions without having to eliminate every anxious thought

MODULE 05 / 13



An anxious thought is a prediction, not a fact

Anxious thoughts often arrive with a feeling of urgency. Because the body is already activated, a possibility can begin to feel like a certainty.

Working with anxious thoughts does not mean arguing with every thought or replacing it with forced positivity. It means treating the thought as a prediction that can be examined.

THOUGHTS ARE INFORMATION

A thought can deserve attention without deserving automatic belief.

What stands out to you about this?

Possibility is not probability

Anxiety is skilled at generating what could happen. The important question is how likely the feared outcome is, what else could happen, and how you would cope if difficulty did occur.

POSSIBILITY

Could this happen at all?

PROBABILITY

How likely is it, based on the whole picture?

COPING

If something difficult happened, what resources would I have?

ALTERNATIVES

What other explanations or outcomes fit the evidence?

A balanced question

Am I responding to what is possible, or to what is most likely?

Common anxious thinking habits

Certain thinking patterns repeatedly increase the sense of threat.

CATASTROPHISING

Jumping from uncertainty to the worst plausible outcome.

OVERESTIMATING RISK

Treating a small possibility as though it is highly likely.

UNDERESTIMATING COPING Assuming you would be unable to manage if something went wrong.

EMOTIONAL REASONING

Using the intensity of fear as evidence that danger must be present.

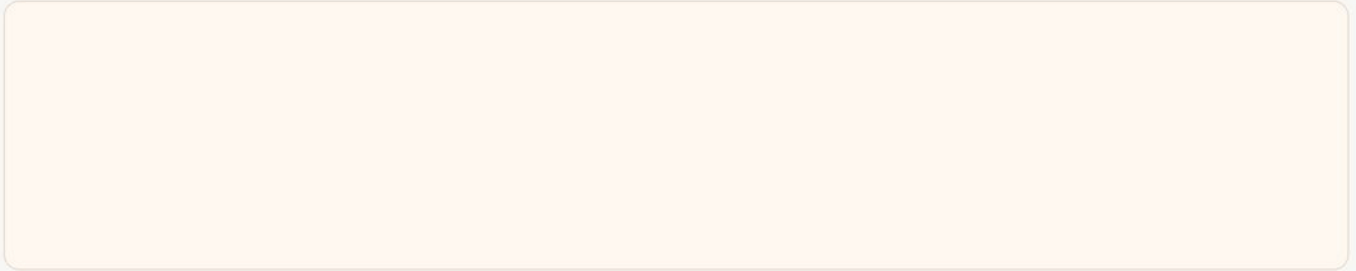
Noticing is enough to begin.

You do not have to correct a thought perfectly before you can choose a different response.

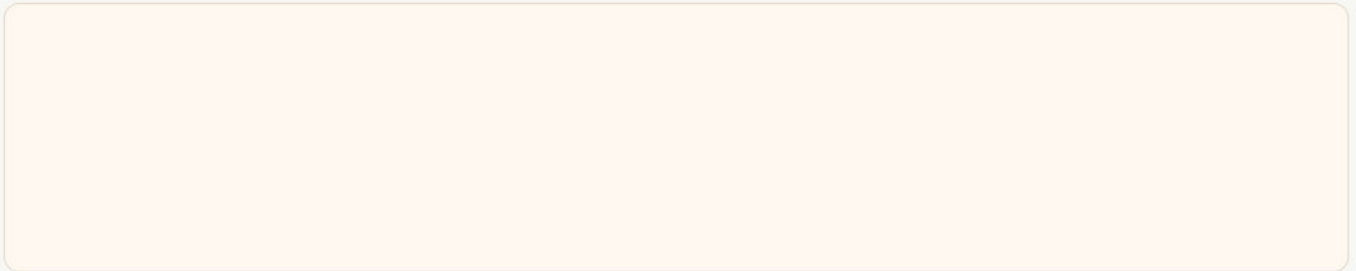
Catch the prediction

Choose one anxious thought that has been showing up recently. Write it as a clear prediction rather than a vague feeling.

What exactly is my mind predicting?



How certain does the prediction feel, from 0 to 100%?



Look at the whole picture

Move beyond the first threat-focused interpretation and deliberately include information anxiety may be leaving out.

What evidence supports the prediction?

What evidence does not fit the prediction?

What is a more balanced or complete way of seeing the situation?

A more useful response to anxious thinking

The goal is to respond in a way that helps you keep living rather than endlessly settling the thought.

1

1
Name the thought as a prediction.

2

2
Check probability, coping and alternative explanations.

3

3
Notice the urge to keep analysing until you feel certain.

4

4
Choose the next useful action even if some uncertainty remains.

A response I want to practise:

Safety Behaviours

When the things that help you feel safer also prevent you from learning that you can cope

MODULE 06 / 13



Feeling safer is not always the same as becoming safer

Safety behaviours are things you do to prevent, reduce or manage a feared outcome. They can make a difficult situation feel possible, which is why they are so easy to rely on.

The difficulty is that when nothing bad happens, anxiety may credit the safety behaviour rather than learning that the situation was manageable.

THE HIDDEN MESSAGE

"I was okay because I protected myself" is very different learning from "I was okay because I could cope."

What stands out to you about this?

Common safety behaviours

Safety behaviours vary widely. What matters is not how unusual the behaviour looks, but what you believe it is preventing.

CHECKING

Repeatedly monitoring doors, symptoms, messages, work or other signs of risk.

OVERPREPARING

Doing far more preparation than the situation reasonably requires.

SAFE PEOPLE

Only entering situations if a particular person is available.

OBJECTS OR RITUALS

Carrying items, following routines or keeping escape options available.

SELF-MONITORING

Closely watching your body, speech, appearance or performance for signs of danger.

The key question

What would I fear if I could not use this behaviour?

How safety behaviours preserve the threat belief

A safety behaviour can prevent the very learning that would weaken anxiety.

PREDICTION

"Something bad will happen unless I protect myself."

SAFETY BEHAVIOUR

You check, prepare, monitor or rely on something.

NO DISASTER

The feared outcome does not occur.

CONCLUSION

Anxiety concludes that the safety behaviour prevented it.

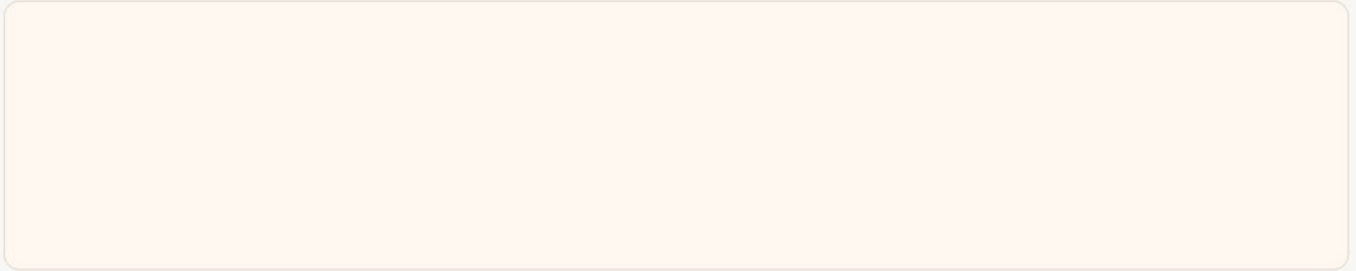
What remains untested?

Whether you could have coped without the extra protection.

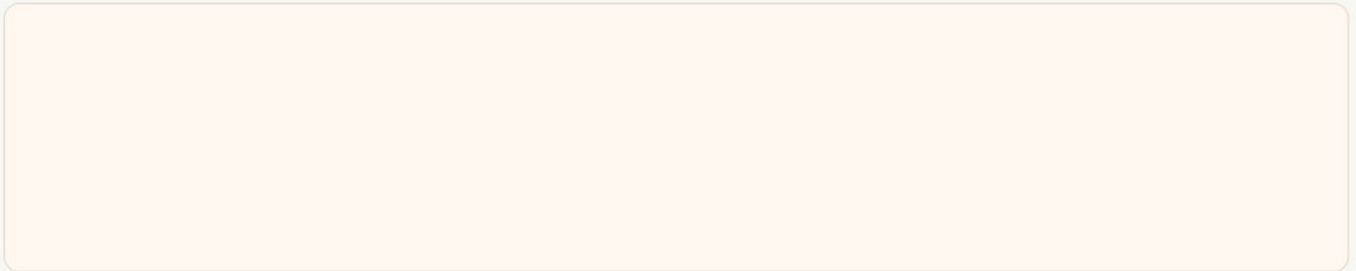
What do you rely on to feel safe?

Think about situations you can tolerate only when certain conditions are in place.

A safety behaviour I often use:



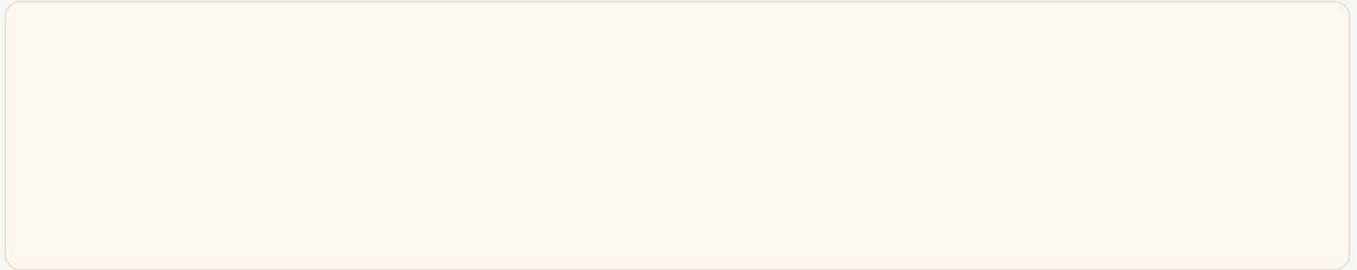
What do I believe it prevents?



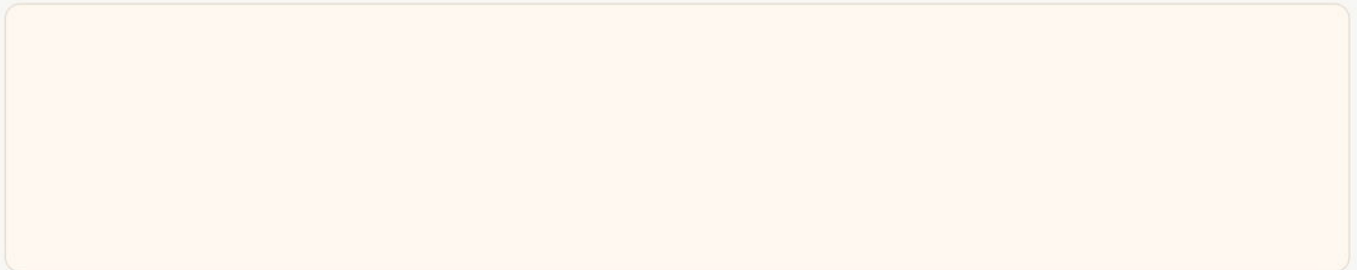
What do you predict would happen without it?

Be specific. A clear prediction makes it possible to test the belief gradually.

If I reduced this safety behaviour, I predict...



How likely does that feel, from 0 to 100%?



Experiment with doing a little less

Dropping a safety behaviour completely may be too large a first step. Reduce it enough that new learning becomes possible.

1

1
Choose one safety behaviour that is not genuinely necessary for safety.

2

2
Reduce it slightly in a manageable situation.

3

3
Notice the anxiety without immediately restoring the behaviour.

4

4
Record what actually happened and what you learned.

One safety behaviour I will reduce slightly:

Reassurance Seeking

Why certainty rarely lasts and how to step out of the reassurance loop

MODULE 07 / 13



Reassurance works - briefly

Reassurance can lower anxiety very quickly. Someone tells you that things are fine, a search result appears reassuring, or you check once more and feel a little calmer.

The problem is that the relief often fades. When uncertainty returns, the mind learns to seek reassurance again rather than learning that uncertainty can be tolerated.

SHORT-TERM CERTAINTY

The more often certainty must be supplied from outside, the less opportunity you have to discover that you can live without it.

What stands out to you about this?

The reassurance cycle

Reassurance becomes self-reinforcing because each round provides a short drop in anxiety.

DOUBT

A question, sensation or possibility appears.

REASSURANCE

You ask, search, check, review or seek confirmation.

RELIEF

Anxiety decreases for a while.

RETURN OF DOUBT

A new detail or possibility reopens the question.

The trap

The goal quietly shifts from making a reasonable decision to feeling completely certain.

Reassurance has many forms

Some reassurance is obvious; other forms happen privately in your own mind.

OTHER PEOPLE

Asking the same question in slightly different ways.

INTERNET SEARCHING

Looking for information until the anxiety settles.

CHECKING

Re-reading, re-examining or confirming details.

MEMORY REVIEW

Replaying events to prove nothing bad happened.

SELF-REASSURANCE

Repeatedly telling yourself that everything will definitely be okay.

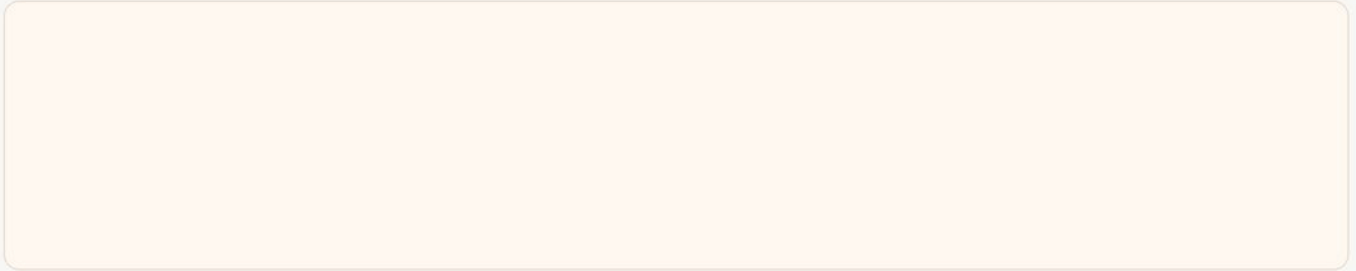
What matters is the function.

If the behaviour is mainly being used to remove uncertainty, it may be part of the reassurance loop.

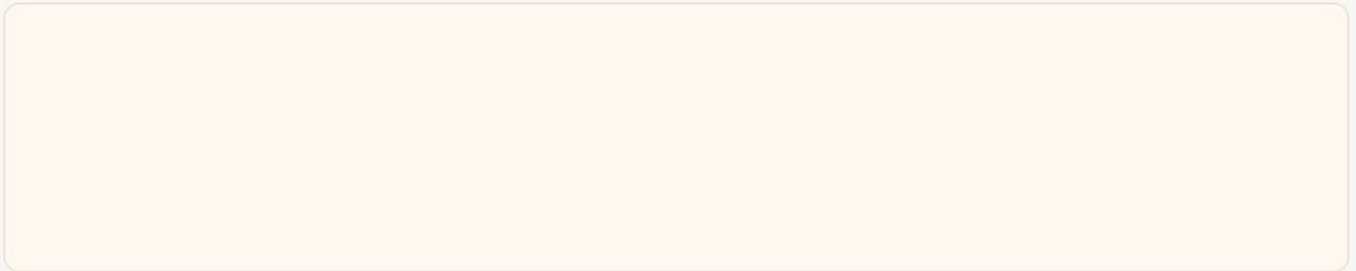
What question are you trying to settle?

Reassurance often circles around one core question that feels as though it must be answered before you can move on.

The question I keep trying to settle is:



What answer would finally feel like enough?



How long does reassurance actually last?

Look at what happens after reassurance rather than only at the moment of relief.

What reassurance do I usually seek?

How long does the relief tend to last before doubt returns?

What does the next round of doubt usually focus on?

Delay, reduce and allow uncertainty

You do not have to stop reassurance all at once. The first skill is creating a gap between doubt and the usual response.

1

1
Notice the urge to seek reassurance.

2

2
Delay the response for a short, planned period.

3

3
Let the uncertainty be present without trying to settle it.

4

4
Return attention to what you were doing or what matters next.

One reassurance behaviour I will delay this week:

Worry and Overthinking

Knowing when thinking is helping and when it has become another attempt to feel certain

MODULE 08 / 13



Thinking can feel productive even when it is going in circles

Worry often feels like preparation. Rumination can feel like problem-solving. Both can create the sense that if you think for long enough, you will finally understand, prevent or control the problem.

Useful thinking produces a decision, a plan or an action. Overthinking keeps reopening the question without meaningfully changing what you can do.

A USEFUL TEST

Is this thinking moving me toward action, or mainly trying to make uncertainty disappear?

What stands out to you about this?

Problem-solving versus worry

The same topic can be approached in very different ways.

PROBLEM-SOLVING

Focuses on a problem that exists now and identifies practical next steps.

WORRY

Focuses on future possibilities and repeatedly asks “what if?”

REFLECTION

Helps you understand something and then allows you to move on.

RUMINATION

Replays the same material in search of certainty, explanation or emotional resolution.

A boundary for thinking

If there is no new information and no new action, more analysis may not be the solution.

The hidden promises of overthinking

Overthinking is often maintained by a belief about what thinking will achieve.

PREVENTION

"If I think through every possibility, I can prevent something bad."

CERTAINTY

"If I analyse enough, I will know for sure."

CONTROL

"If I prepare for everything, nothing can catch me off guard."

EXPLANATION

"If I understand exactly why this happened, I will finally feel okay."

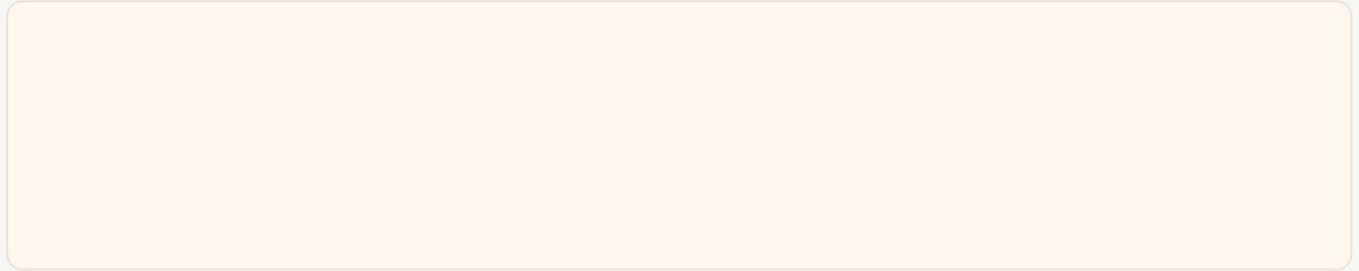
The problem

These promises ask thinking to provide certainty that thinking cannot actually guarantee.

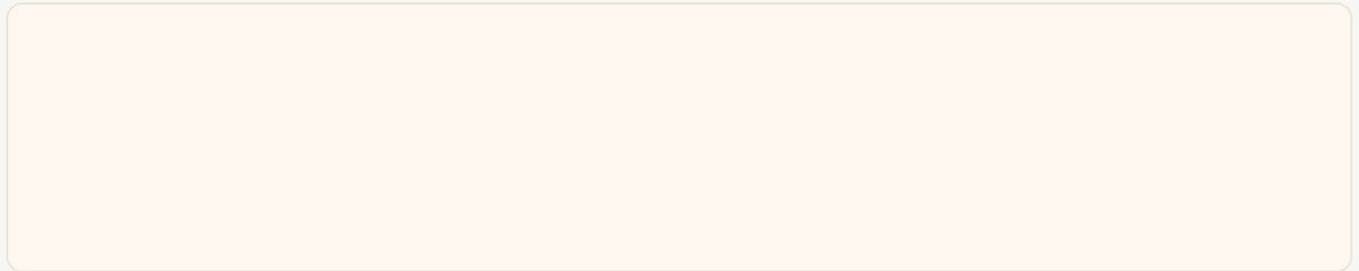
Is this problem solvable right now?

A practical problem has an action you can take. A hypothetical problem asks you to solve a future that has not happened.

What am I worrying or overthinking about?



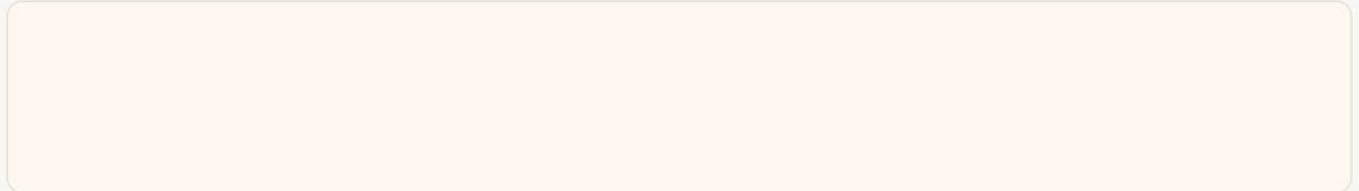
Is there a concrete action I can take today? If yes, what is it?



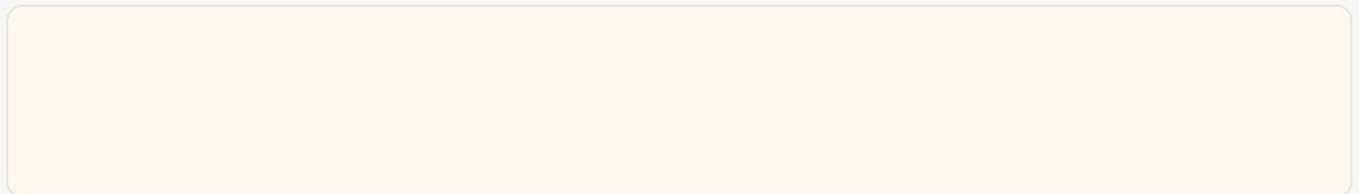
What happens when you keep thinking?

Look at the actual effect of extended analysis on your mood, attention and behaviour.

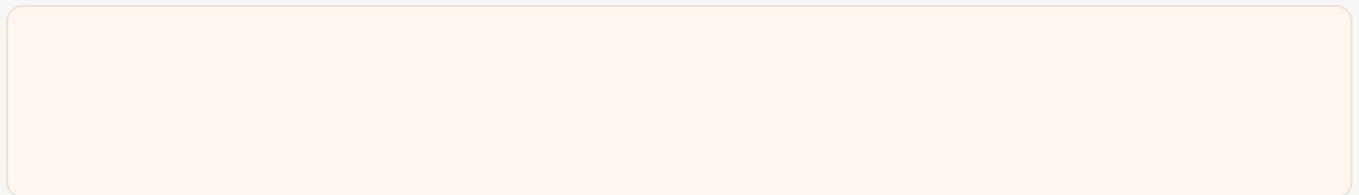
What do I hope more thinking will give me?



What does it actually give me after 20 or 30 minutes?



What does overthinking stop me from doing?



Know when to leave a question unanswered

Stopping overthinking does not require resolving the question first.

1

1
Notice that you have moved from useful thinking into repetition.

2

2
Write down any practical action that genuinely needs doing.

3

3
Name the remaining uncertainty without trying to solve it.

4

4
Redirect attention to the next meaningful activity.

A question I will practise leaving unanswered:

Intolerance of Uncertainty

Building the ability to move forward without knowing exactly what will happen

MODULE 09 / 13



Anxiety often asks for certainty that life cannot provide

Uncertainty is uncomfortable because it leaves room for unwanted possibilities. Anxiety responds by trying to reduce that space through checking, reassurance, planning, avoidance or overthinking.

The goal is not to convince yourself that everything will turn out well. It is to become more able to move forward when the outcome cannot be guaranteed.

UNCERTAINTY IS NOT DANGER

Not knowing what will happen is uncomfortable, but discomfort and danger are not the same thing.

What stands out to you about this?

The certainty trap

Attempts to eliminate uncertainty often teach the mind that uncertainty itself is intolerable.

UNCERTAINTY

A question remains open.

CERTAINTY-SEEKING

You check, plan, ask, analyse or avoid.

TEMPORARY RELIEF

The question feels settled for a while.

LOWER TOLERANCE

The next uncertain situation feels even more urgent to resolve.

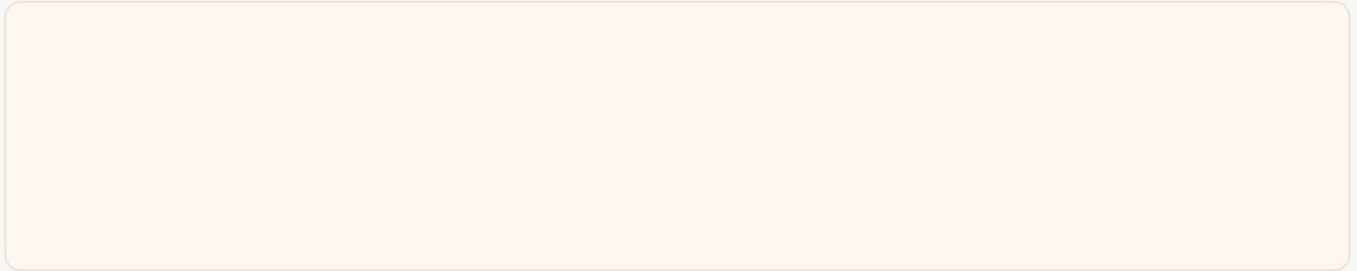
A different aim

Instead of “How do I become certain?”, ask “How can I continue even while I am uncertain?”

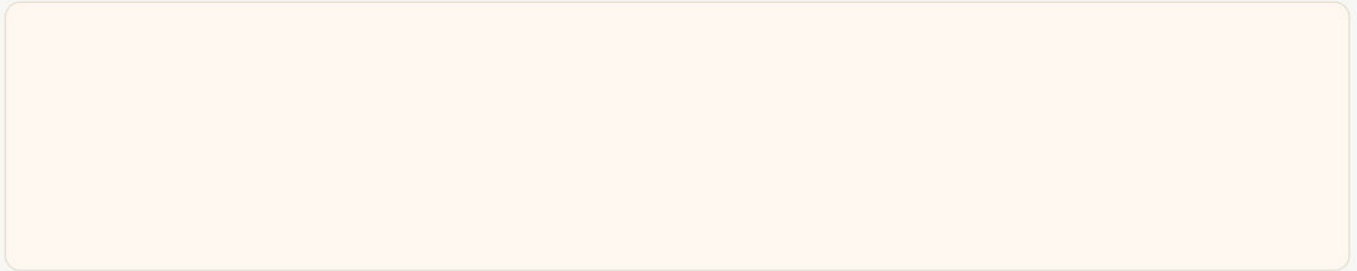
Where do you demand certainty?

People often tolerate uncertainty well in some areas and struggle greatly in others.

Situations where I feel I need to know for sure:



What do I usually do when certainty is unavailable?



Your uncertainty ladder

Choose small situations where you can deliberately allow more uncertainty rather than immediately resolving it.

A mildly uncertain situation I could practise with:

A moderately difficult uncertainty I could work toward:

A more challenging uncertainty I may eventually be willing to face:

Practising small amounts of not knowing

Tolerance grows through experience, not through proving that every uncertain situation is safe.

1

1
Choose one low-level uncertainty from your ladder.

2

2
Reduce one certainty-seeking behaviour.

3

3
Notice the urge to resolve the uncertainty.

4

4
Let time pass while continuing with your day.

One uncertainty I will deliberately leave open:

I can handle uncertainty without resolving it

The aim is not to enjoy uncertainty. It is to stop organising your life around eliminating it.

NOTICE

Recognise the demand for certainty.

ALLOW

Let the question remain open.

CHOOSE

Decide what matters next even without a guarantee.

LEARN

Notice that uncertainty can be present without controlling your behaviour.

NEXT

Module 10 focuses on how new experiences teach your nervous system more effectively than reassurance alone.

Learning Through Experience

Why doing something differently can teach your nervous system what reassurance cannot

MODULE 10 / 13



Your threat system learns from experience

You can understand intellectually that a situation is probably safe and still feel anxious. That is because threat learning is not changed by words alone.

The nervous system updates when experience repeatedly contradicts what it predicted or shows that you can cope with discomfort more effectively than expected.

NEW EXPERIENCE CREATES NEW LEARNING

You do not have to feel safe first. You need opportunities to discover what actually happens.

What stands out to you about this?

New learning needs new evidence

If you enter a feared situation but use every usual safety strategy, the brain may attribute success to the protection rather than to your own capacity.

PREDICTION

Be clear about what anxiety expects.

BEHAVIOUR

Do something meaningfully different from the usual protective response.

OBSERVATION

Stay curious about what actually happens.

LEARNING

Compare the outcome with the prediction rather than only judging how anxious you felt.

Important

An experiment can be useful even when anxiety remains high. Learning is the goal, not immediate calm.

Prediction versus outcome

Choose a recent situation where anxiety predicted something would go badly.

What did you predict would happen?

What actually happened?

What did you learn about the situation or your ability to cope?

What did you expect? What happened?

Use this page after deliberately approaching a feared or uncertain situation.

Before: what was my prediction and how likely did it feel?

During: what did I notice without escaping or overprotecting?

After: what happened that anxiety did not fully predict?

Look for what surprised you

Threat learning changes most when the experience contains information the old prediction did not expect.

OUTCOME

Did the feared event happen exactly as predicted?

COPING

Did you handle more discomfort than you expected?

ANXIETY

Did anxiety change even though you did not force it to?

FREEDOM

Were you able to do something that anxiety had been restricting?

The question to keep asking

What did this experience teach me that reassurance could not?

Repeat the learning, not the reassurance

One successful experience is useful. Repetition across different situations makes the new learning more available when anxiety returns.

1

1
Repeat the experiment more than once.

2

2
Vary the situation slightly so learning is not tied to one perfect set of conditions.

3

3
Reduce unnecessary safety behaviours where possible.

4

4
Record the lesson in one clear sentence after each attempt.

The learning I want to strengthen is:

Building Behavioural Experiments

Turning anxious predictions into questions you can test in real life

MODULE 11 / 13



An experiment is different from forcing yourself through fear

A behavioural experiment is designed to answer a question. You begin with a prediction, make a planned change in behaviour and observe what happens.

The aim is not to prove that nothing bad can ever happen. It is to collect better information about risk, coping and what your protective behaviours are actually doing.

BE CURIOUS, NOT PERFECT

A useful experiment asks "What can I learn?" rather than "Can I make myself feel calm?"

What stands out to you about this?

Start with a clear prediction

Vague fears are difficult to test. Make the prediction specific enough that you will know what evidence would count.

— SITUATION

Where and when will you run the experiment?

— PREDICTION

What exactly does anxiety expect to happen?

— LIKELIHOOD

How likely does the prediction feel before you begin?

— MEASURE

What will you observe afterwards?

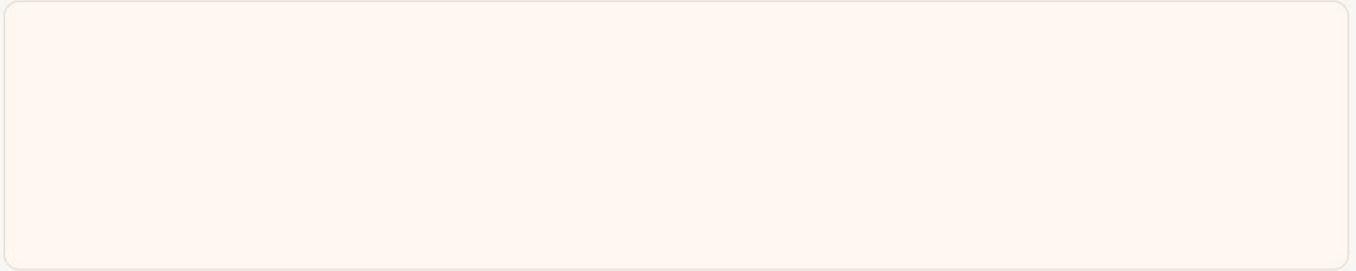
Make it testable

“I will feel awful” is harder to test than “I will panic, lose control and have to leave within ten minutes.”

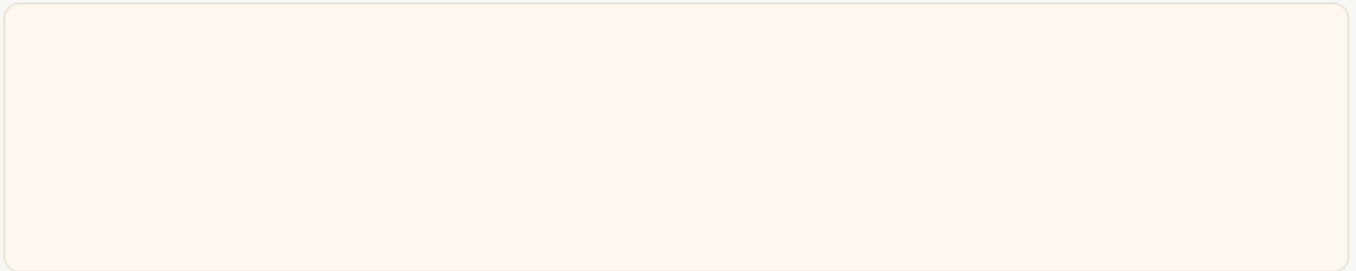
Choose what you will do differently

The experiment needs to change at least one maintaining behaviour.

What do I usually do to stay safe or reduce anxiety?



What will I reduce, delay or do differently this time?



Build your experiment

Write the plan before you start so the goal does not shift once anxiety rises.

My prediction:

How likely does it feel, 0 to 100%?

The behaviour or safety strategy I will change:

What I will do if anxiety rises:

What actually happened?

After the experiment, focus on observable information rather than whether it felt comfortable.

What happened compared with my prediction?

What did I cope with better than expected?

What would I change or test next time?

What does the result teach you?

The value of an experiment comes from the lesson you carry forward.

1**OLD BELIEF**

What did anxiety expect?

2**NEW EVIDENCE**

What information did the experiment provide?

3**REVISED BELIEF**

How would you update the prediction now?

4**NEXT TEST**

What experiment would strengthen the learning further?

One sentence I want to remember from this experiment:

Responding Differently to Anxiety

Creating more choice between the alarm you feel and the action you take

MODULE 12 / 13



The goal is not to never feel anxious

If progress is measured only by how calm you feel, anxiety remains in charge of deciding whether you are succeeding. A more useful measure is whether you can keep choosing your behaviour even when anxiety appears.

Responding differently means noticing the alarm, allowing some discomfort and acting according to what matters rather than automatically following the protective urge.

FREEDOM BEFORE CALM

You can build a freer life before anxiety has completely settled.

What stands out to you about this?

Notice - name - allow - choose

A simple sequence can help when anxiety rises.

— NOTICE

Recognise the first signs without immediately fixing them.

— NAME

"This is my threat system making a prediction."

— ALLOW

Make room for some uncertainty or discomfort without fighting for immediate relief.

— CHOOSE

Take the next action that fits your goals or values rather than the anxiety rule.

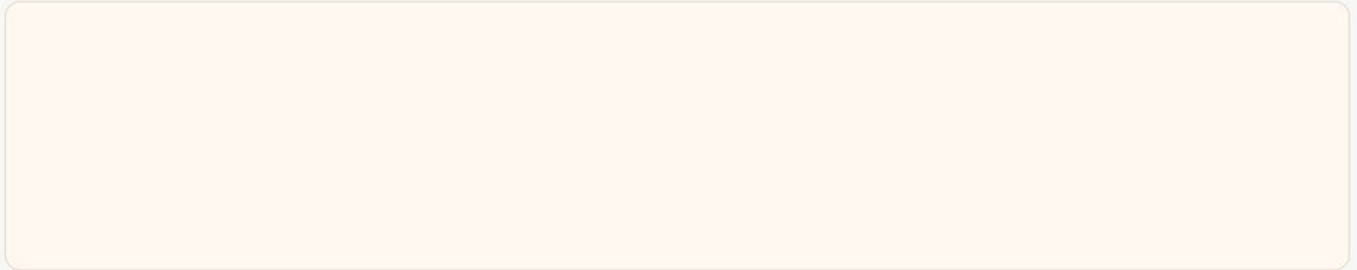
Keep it simple

The sequence is not a ritual to perform perfectly. It is a way to create a pause before the usual response.

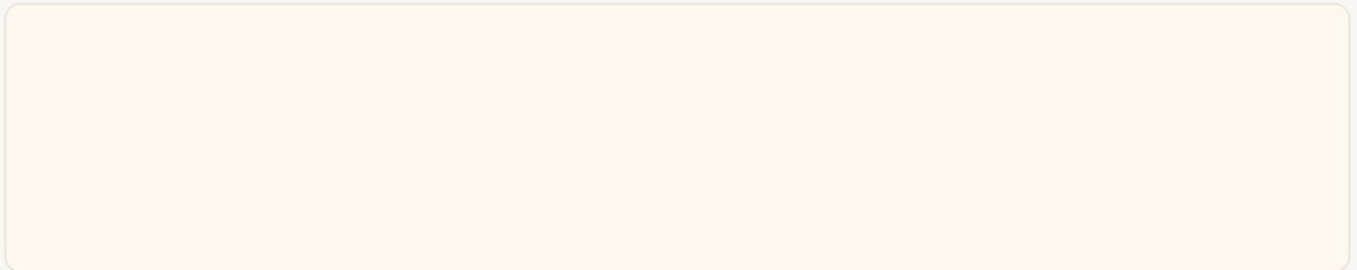
What anxiety wants you to do versus what matters to you

Anxiety often offers a short-term rule. Your values describe the direction you want your life to move.

When anxiety rises, what does it usually tell me to do?



If anxiety were not making the decision, what would matter to me here?



Your new response plan

Write a plan you can use when familiar patterns return.

The early signs I want to notice:

The protective response I want to reduce:

The action I want to choose instead:

What will you do when anxiety rises?

Expect anxiety to show up while you practise. The skill is responding differently, not preventing activation.

1

1
Pause before the automatic response.

2

2
Name the prediction and the uncertainty.

3

3
Use the smallest approach action that still moves toward what matters.

4

4
Review what you learned afterwards rather than judging success by anxiety level.

A situation where I will practise this response:

Progress means more freedom, not perfect calm

A person can still experience anxiety and have made substantial progress.

LESS AVOIDANCE

You are doing more of what anxiety once restricted.

LESS CERTAINTY-SEEKING

You can leave more questions unanswered.

MORE CHOICE

You notice urges without automatically following them.

MORE RECOVERY

Setbacks become something you understand and respond to, rather than evidence that you are back at the beginning.

NEXT

Module 13 brings the whole workbook together into your personal anxiety blueprint.

WORKBOOK SERIES

Your Anxiety Blueprint

Bringing together what you have learned and creating a plan you can keep using

MODULE 13 / 13



Your anxiety makes more sense now

By this point, the aim is not to have a perfect explanation for every anxious moment. It is to understand the repeating mechanisms well enough that you know where you have choices.

Your blueprint brings together triggers, predictions, body responses, avoidance, safety behaviours, reassurance, overthinking, uncertainty and the new experiences that help your nervous system learn.

A BLUEPRINT IS A GUIDE

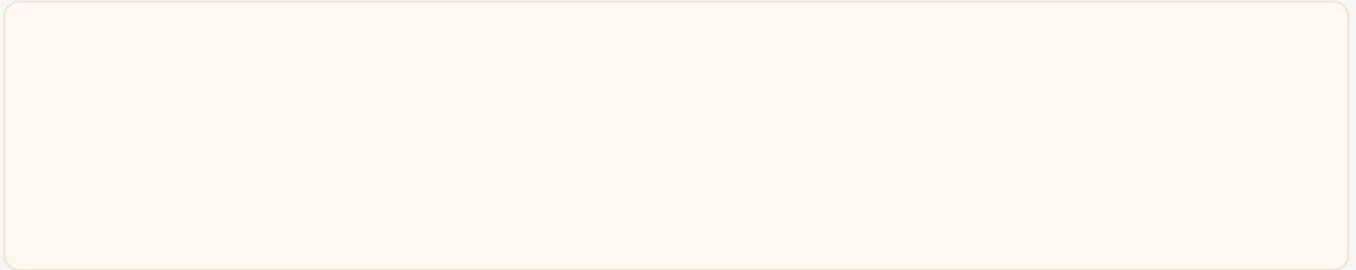
Use it to recognise the pattern sooner and remember what tends to help when anxiety becomes convincing again.

What stands out to you about this?

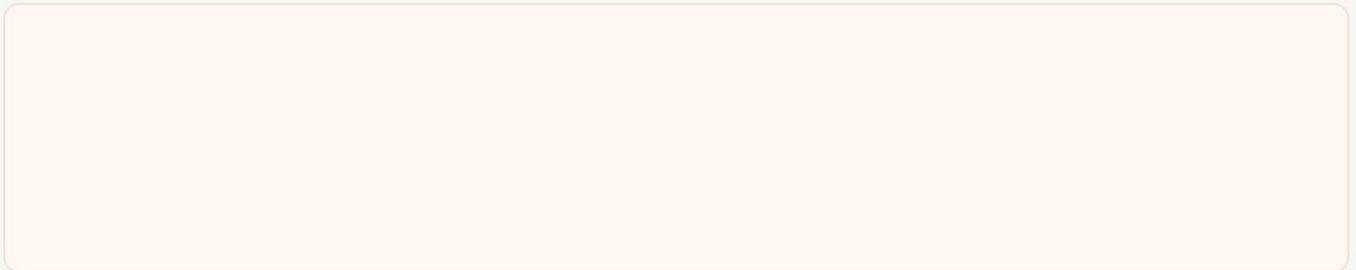
My common triggers and threat predictions

Start with the situations and meanings that repeatedly activate your threat system.

The situations, sensations or themes that often trigger me:



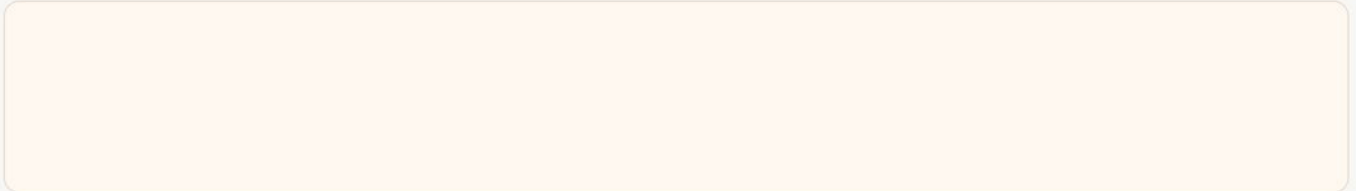
The threat predictions that tend to follow:



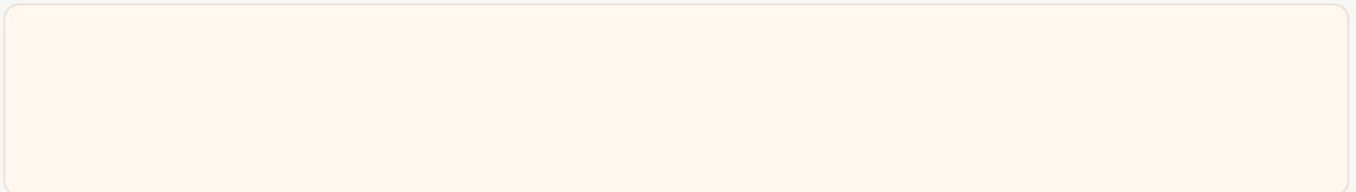
How my body and emotions respond

Your early warning signs are useful because they often appear before the full pattern is underway.

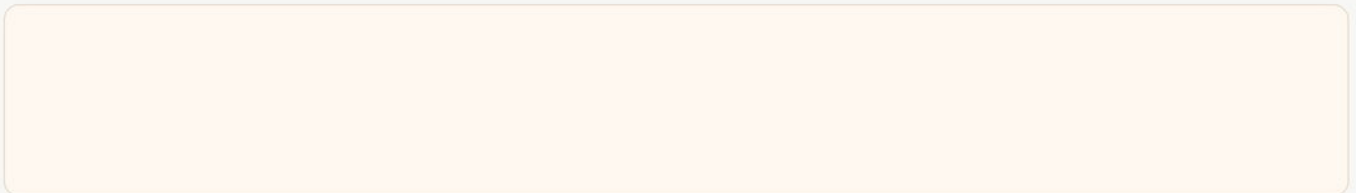
My common physical signs:



The emotions I notice most often:



The urges that appear when the alarm is active:



What I do to feel safer

Bring together the protective strategies you have identified across the workbook.

AVOIDANCE

What do I stay away from, leave or postpone?

SAFETY BEHAVIOURS

What do I rely on to feel protected?

REASSURANCE

Who or what do I use to settle uncertainty?

OVERTHINKING

What questions do I repeatedly try to solve in my head?

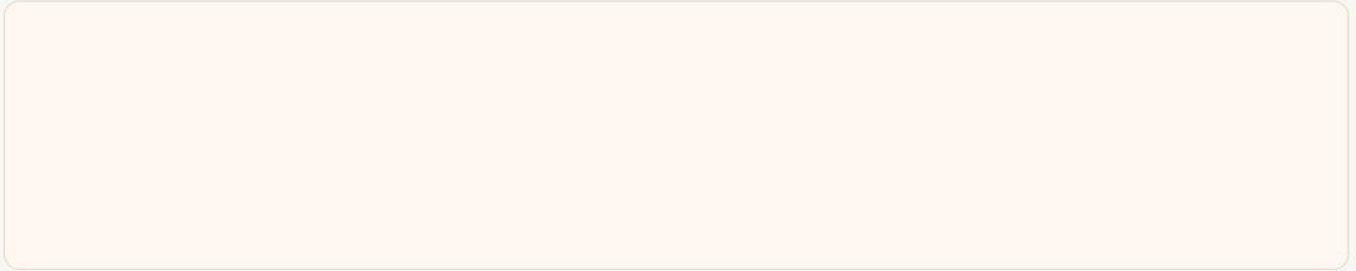
The common function

These strategies usually make sense as attempts to reduce threat or uncertainty.

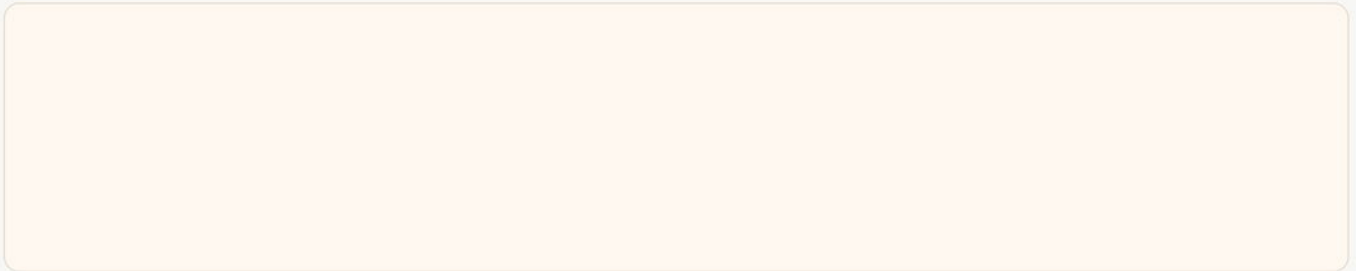
What keeps my cycle going?

Look across the whole pattern and identify the responses that provide short-term relief but seem to strengthen anxiety over time.

The responses that give me immediate relief:



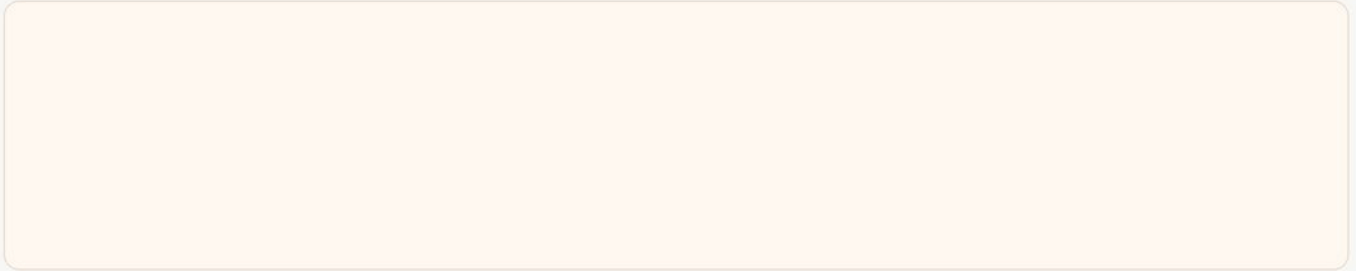
What those responses may be teaching my anxiety:



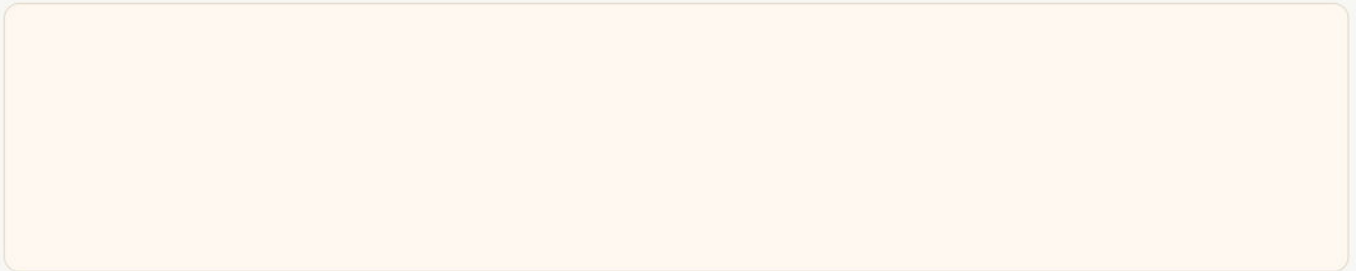
What helps me step out of the cycle?

List the skills that have been most useful when you practise them rather than only when you read about them.

The skills that help me create more choice:



The experiments or approach actions that have taught me the most:



My early warning signs and response plan

Create a concise plan you can return to when anxiety becomes strong again.

When I notice these early signs...

I want to remember that my mind is predicting...

Instead of my usual protective response, I will try...

The person, value or activity I want to stay connected to is...

When anxiety returns

Anxiety may become stronger again during stress, change, illness, loss or periods of reduced sleep. A return of symptoms does not erase what you have learned.

NOTICE EARLY

Look for the familiar pattern rather than waiting until anxiety is severe.

RETURN TO BASICS

Reduce avoidance, reassurance and safety behaviours gradually.

RUN SMALL EXPERIMENTS Create fresh experiences that test the old predictions.

EXPECT FLUCTUATION

Progress is rarely a straight line. Repetition matters more than perfection.

My plan for a setback:

Your blueprint

You now have a working model of your anxiety and a set of skills for responding differently.

— **I KNOW**

what tends to trigger my threat system.

— **I RECOGNISE**

the predictions and protective responses that keep the cycle going.

— **I CAN PRACTISE**

approach, uncertainty, reduced reassurance and behavioural experiments.

— **I WILL MEASURE**

progress by freedom, flexibility and choice rather than by perfect calm.

KEEP GOING

The aim is not to finish anxiety. It is to keep strengthening the way you respond to it.