

Unhelpful Behaviours

Unhelpful behaviours are used because in the short term they make us feel better. The problem is that in the long term, if used a lot, these behaviours can backfire and worsen how we, or others, feel. They can become part of the problem. The good news is that if this applies to you, you can make changes.

| Problem | Unhelpful Behaviour | Good Reason | How it can keep the problem going |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| Anxiety | Avoidance | Keep safe | Keep fearing situation |
| Anxiety | Reassurance-seeking | Reduce anxiety | Only temporary relief, lose self confidence |
| Anxiety | Relying on others | Reduce anxiety | Don't develop self confidence |
| Anxiety | Procrastination | Reduce anxiety | Feel bad, affects performance |
| Anxiety | Excessive activity | Avoid bad feelings | Get exhausted |
| Low mood | Reduce activity | Tired, low energy | Mood drops, feel worse |
| Low mood | Social withdrawal | Think I'm no fun | Mood stays low |
| Low mood | Blocking feelings* | Block feelings | Temporary, causes other problems |
| Worry | Suppress worry | Fear worry harmful | Worry recurs, seems out of control |
| Health anxiety | Monitor/check body | Spot symptoms | Notice minor/harmless changes |
| Social anxiety | Avoid interacting | Avoid looking anxious | Limits good interactions |
| Relationship | Being passive | Avoid conflict | Don't get needs met |
| Relationship | Complaining | Hope for change | Doesn't work, causes tension |
| Relationship | Being aggressive | Get what you want | Creates distance & fear |
| Relationship | Pushing others away | Avoid distress | Problems unresolved/ worsen |
| Chronic Physical illness | Reduced activity | Trying to recover | Lose benefits of activity, mood drops |
| Insomnia | Worry about sleep | Get enough sleep | ↑ anxiety, ↑ tension, ↓ sleep |
| Insomnia | Napping in day | Tired | Disturbed sleep rhythm |
| Insomnia | Staying in bed awake | Trying to sleep | Brain forgets that: bed=sleep |

*Blocking feelings can be through alcohol, drugs, gaming, excessive TV watching, eating, spending money, sexual activity, self-harming behaviour, gambling or risk taking behaviour.

Helpful behaviours

Helpful behaviours are things you can do that help you to cope. They don't 'undo' unhelpful behaviours. The idea is to reduce unhelpful behaviours and also to increase helpful behaviours.

Am I:

- Being good to myself e.g. eating regularly and healthily, taking time to enjoy my food?
- Doing things for fun and pleasure, e.g. hobbies, listening to music, having a bath?
- Seeking support from others and sharing concerns with trusted friends and family members?
- Seeking out other helpful sources of support in the community e.g. budget advice?
- Using self- help materials so that I can find out more about how to help myself?
- Socialising, either by telephone, email or going out?
- Challenging anxious or negative thoughts by stopping and reflecting on other ways of seeing things, rather than jumping to conclusions?
- Keeping as active as I can e.g. doing exercise, going for walks, swimming, gardening or going to the gym?
- Using my sense of humour to cope?
- Planning time for myself as well as others?
- Taking any prescribed medication regularly and as prescribed?
- Using strategies to reduce feelings of tension, such as slow breathing and relaxation techniques