

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