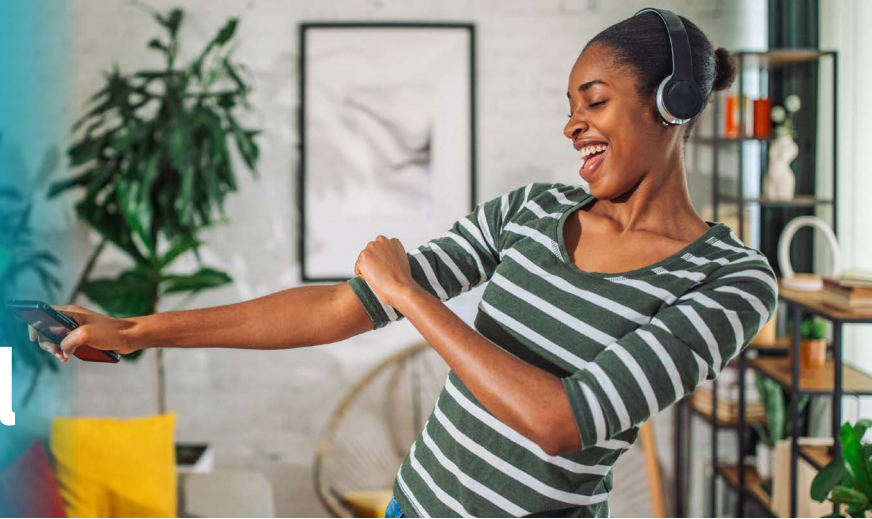


# Managing an Anxious Mind



The fear of failure, performance anxiety, and the constant pursuit of perfection can lead to stress and anxiety.

An anxious mind at work can be exhausting! When someone experiences those anxious thoughts, the following common behaviors might occur:

## Anxious behaviors:

- **Ruminating:** excessively mentally reviewing or analyzing
- **Seeking reassurance:** asking others if they think you made a mistake, if there will be a problem, if they are upset with you, etc.
- **Avoidance:** avoiding places, people, or situations that trigger the anxiety
- **Checking:** excessively researching online, redoing tasks to ensure they were don't "right," looking for mistakes, etc.

These behaviors are part of the "worry cycle," and they can keep us stuck. Here are some helpful tips for managing the worry cycle in the moment:

## Short-term Strategies

- **Take a breath:** Slow down your breathing for a few minutes. Try inhaling, holding, exhaling, and holding for four seconds each.
- **Label the thinking:** For example, "I'm having a thought about school, but I don't have to give this my attention right now."
- **Redirect attention:** Shift your attention to what is happening right now by focusing on your five senses.
- **Engage in a hobby:** Doing something you value deserves your attention more than the what-ifs.

- **Get moving:** Take a walk, go for a run, or just dance!
- **Play with a pet:** It can help break out of a rumination cycle.
- **Sing:** Singing can interrupt ruminating and boost mood.
- **Do for others:** Random acts of kindness can shift our focus to something other than our worries.

While these strategies can help in the moment, long-term strategies can help for less anxiety overall. Some of these strategies include:

## Long-term Strategies

- **Practice mindfulness:** Mindfulness is the practice of noticing distracting thoughts, allowing them to move on without judgment, and bringing attention back to the here and now.
- **Take a news and social media break:** Put your phone down and unplug more often. Limit your news and take a break from social media.
- **Improve your overall health:** One of the simplest and best ways to manage mood and anxiety is improving overall health. The foundation for better health includes: regular exercise; drinking enough water; limiting caffeine; eating a healthy and balanced diet; and getting consistent, restful sleep.

Although we can't control when our anxious minds are triggered, engaging in some of these strategies can help us from getting stuck in the what-ifs, to pay more attention to what's truly important and happening in the moment.