

Not Just Talk

WHAT IS ANXIETY?

AN EASY TO READ GUIDE



New Brunswick
Association For
Community Living

Association du
Nouveau-Brunswick
pour l'intégration
communautaire



Acknowledgements

This project has been graciously funded by Bell Let's Talk with additional contributions provided by the Saint John Community Living Board. The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the specified funders.

Content developed and researched by Cathy Boyce
Illustrations by Heather Hamilton



How to Use This Guide

What is Anxiety? An Easy Read Guide is a resource to help people understand anxiety.

It can be used with or without support of someone like a friend or family member.

In this guide there is information about how to understand a mental health issue called anxiety and what you can do to make yourself feel better.

At the end of the guide you can read Jennifer's Story, which will help you to understand anxiety.

We all worry from time to time. Worry is an important feeling. It can help to keep us safe.

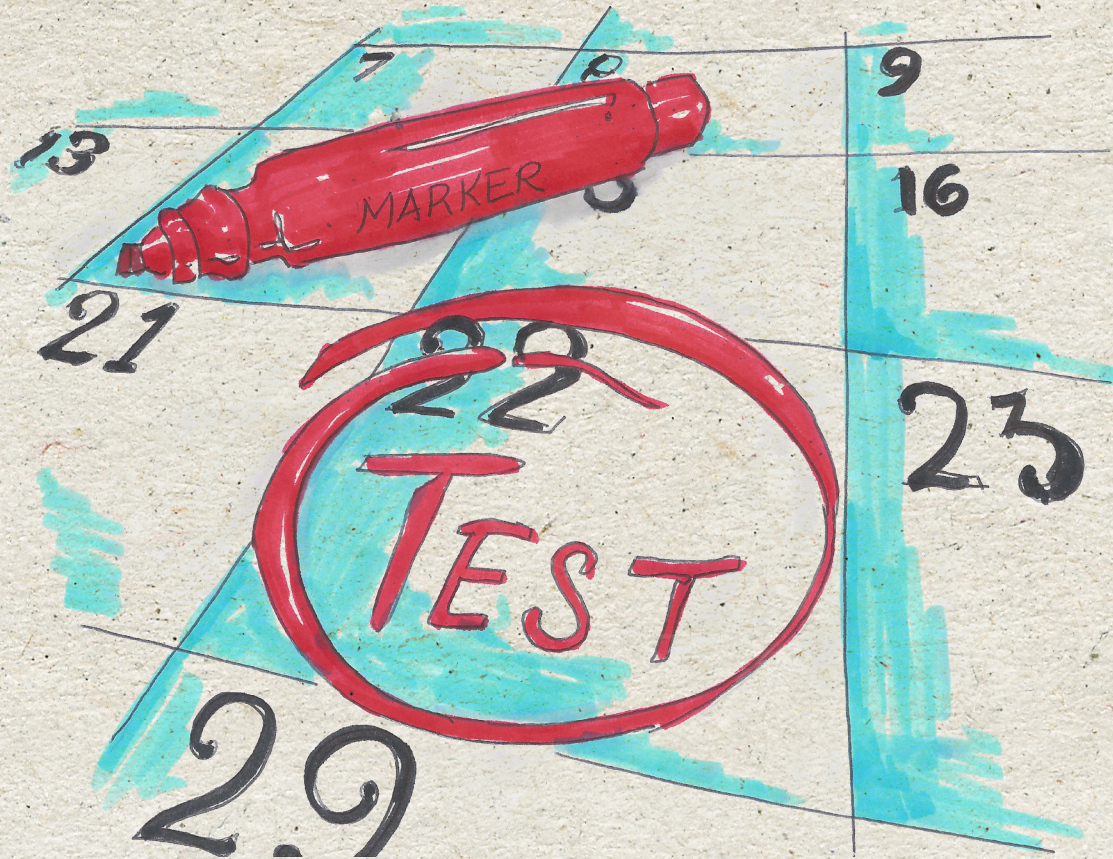
There are many times when we might have worries.

For example:



When meeting new people.

It is OK to Worry...



When we have to write a test..

It is OK to Worry...

*When a friend or family member
is sick or in the hospital.*



It is OK to Worry...

When we don't have enough money.



It is OK to Worry...

When we are being teased.



These are all normal reasons to feel worried. Most people will feel ok again soon after feeling worried.

What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is different than having normal worries.

Anxiety is what happens when having worries stops you from doing everyday things.



Anxiety is a mental health issue. You can do things to make yourself feel better. Some people may need medicine to help deal with anxiety. Some people may need to talk to other people about their anxiety.



**There are different reasons
people might have anxiety.**



Some people might have anxiety when they
have to go into a large group of people.

Some people might
be afraid because
of something going
on in their life that
they don't like.



Anxiety can change the way you act.

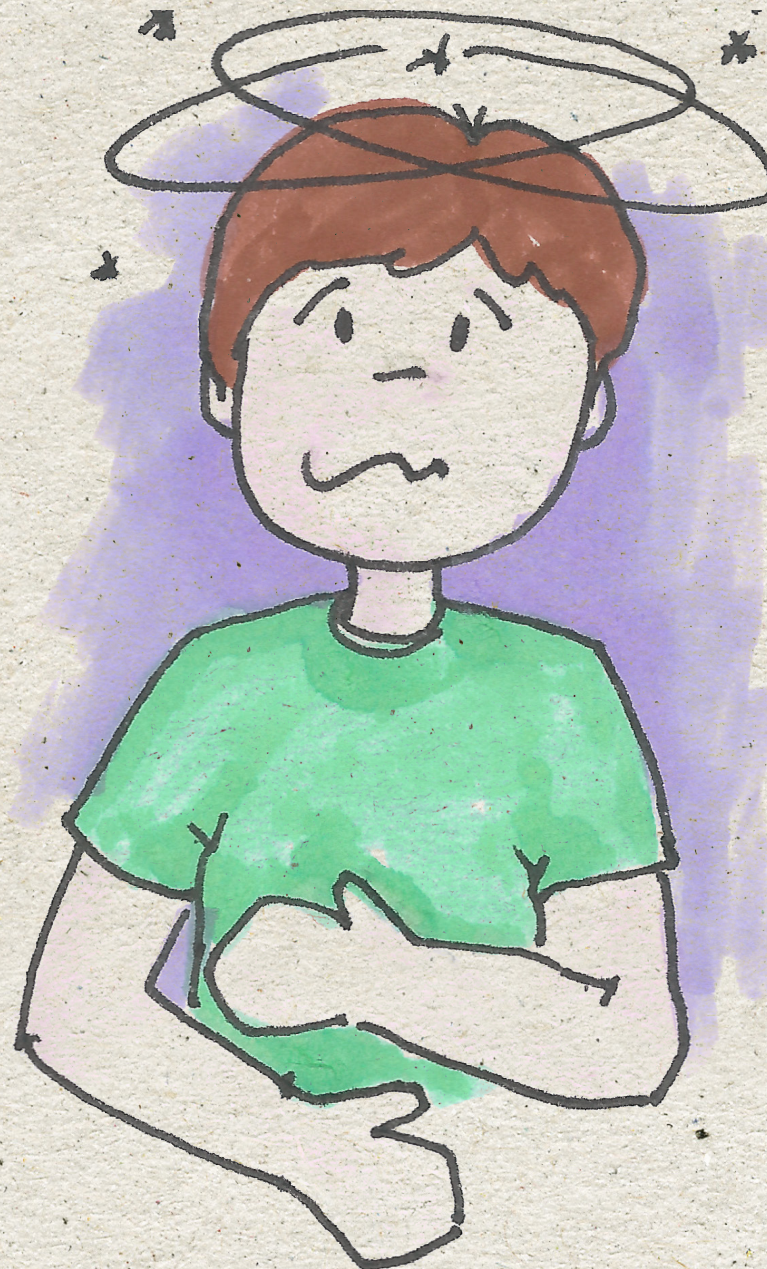


If you have anxiety you might...

Worry most of the day.

If you have anxiety you might...

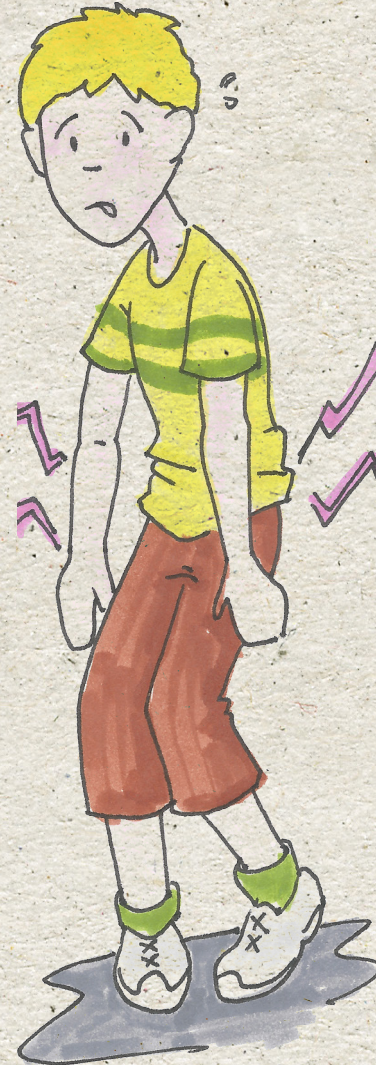
Feel dizzy.



If you have anxiety you might...



*Feel sick to
your stomach.*



Faint..

If you have anxiety you might...



Find it hard to think.

If you have anxiety you might...

Feel angry.



*Breathe quickly and feel like
your heart is beating fast.*

When you have anxiety
it will change how you
do things.

Everyone does things
differently when they
have anxiety.



What to do if you think you have anxiety:

Sometimes the anxious feelings just go away.

BUT – If you keep feeling anxious, tell someone you trust like a family member, a friend, or a doctor.

It is important to ask for help.

You don't have to try and deal with this alone.



**There are things that
you can do to help you
get better when you
have anxiety:**

You can talk to someone you like
and trust like a family member or
a friend. Talk about how you feel.

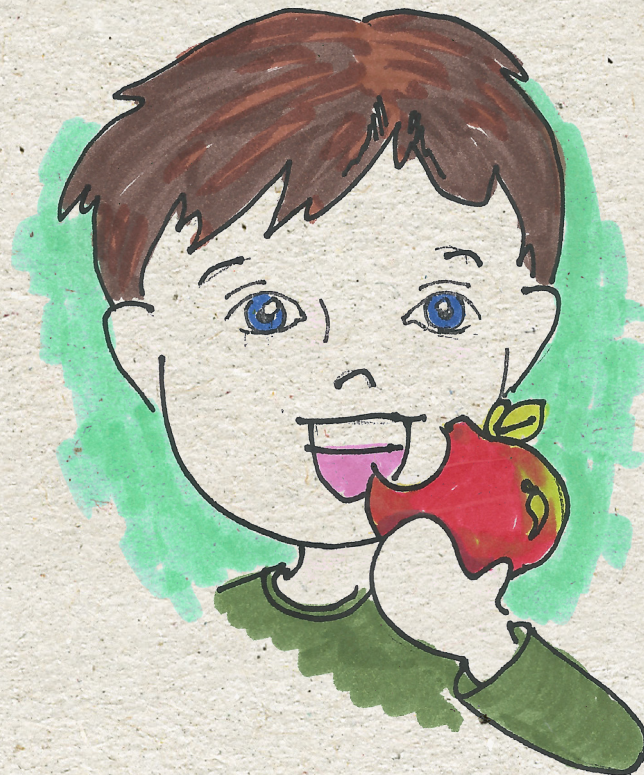


You can get lots of sleep. Go to bed at an earlier hour if you have not been able to sleep through the night.



You can make sure you eat healthy food and drink plenty of water.

You can exercise.
Going for a walk,
bike ride or to the
gym can help.



You can let people that you
like and trust help you.





You can try to do
something that you love
every day.

You can go outside to
get some sunlight.

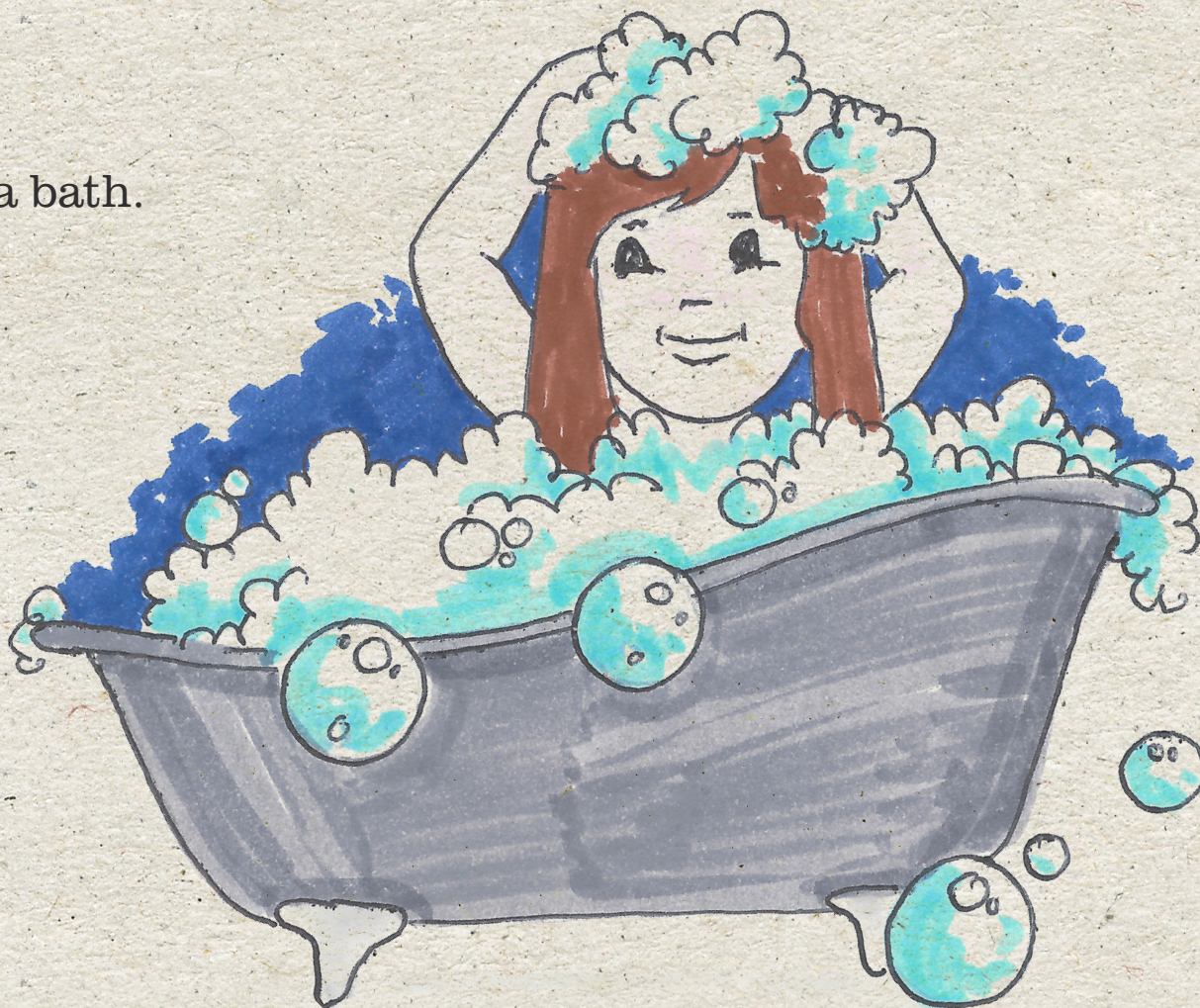


You can write down or
draw how you are feeling.



You can listen to music you like.

You can have a bath.



Practicing deep breathing can help when you have anxiety.

Deep breathing is easy to do. You can get a friend, family member, or someone else to join you while you practice.

- Sit or lie down in a comfortable position.
- Put one hand on your belly and one hand on your chest.
- Take a deep breath in through your nose.
- Fill your chest with air.
- Breathe out through your mouth. Make a small circle with your lips when you breathe out.
- Do this in and out breathing 3 to 10 times. Take your time with each breath.
- Notice how you feel after the deep breathing.

**Do you feel calmer? More relaxed?
Is anxiety still there?**



Practice the **3-2-1** exercise if you have difficulty falling asleep or relaxing:

- Sit in a comfortable seat or lie down.
- Look around the room and say (out loud or to yourself) **3 things you see**. Listen and say **3 things you hear**. Feel and say **3 things you feel**.
- Look and say **2 things you see**. Listen and say **2 things you hear**. Feel and say **2 things you feel**.
- Look and say **1 thing you see**. Listen and say **1 thing you hear**. Feel and say **1 thing you feel**.

Exercises like Deep Breathing and **3-2-1** can help you relax and stop thinking about worries you have.

If you have anxiety you may have a panic attack.

Panic attacks feel stronger than anxiety. Sometimes they happen without any reason.

They are scary.

If you are having a panic attack most of the time you are not in danger.

When you are having a panic attack:

- Your heart might beat faster.
- You might feel sick to your stomach.
- You might have a pain in your chest.
- You might breathe too fast or have a hard time breathing.



When you have a panic attack you feel very scared.

Even though panic attacks feel scary, they are not dangerous and they do go away.

These are things to do if you are having a panic attack:

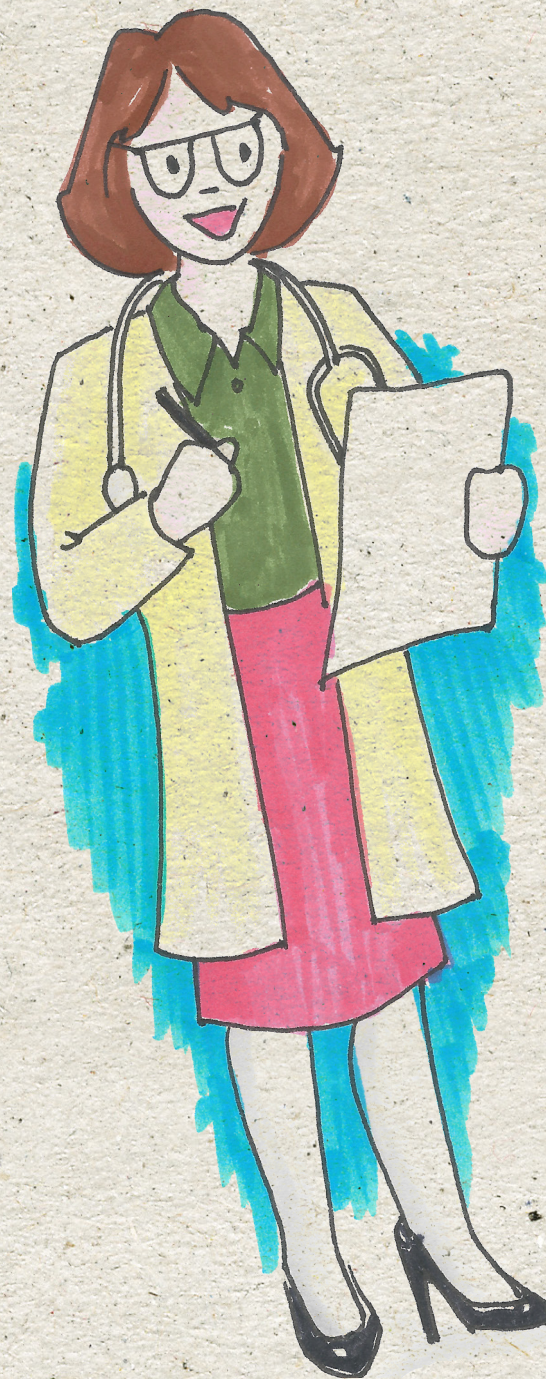
- Try to take slow deep breaths.
- Remember you are not in danger.
- Tell yourself you are ok and that the panic attack will pass.



If you think you have anxiety:

You might have to go to the doctor.

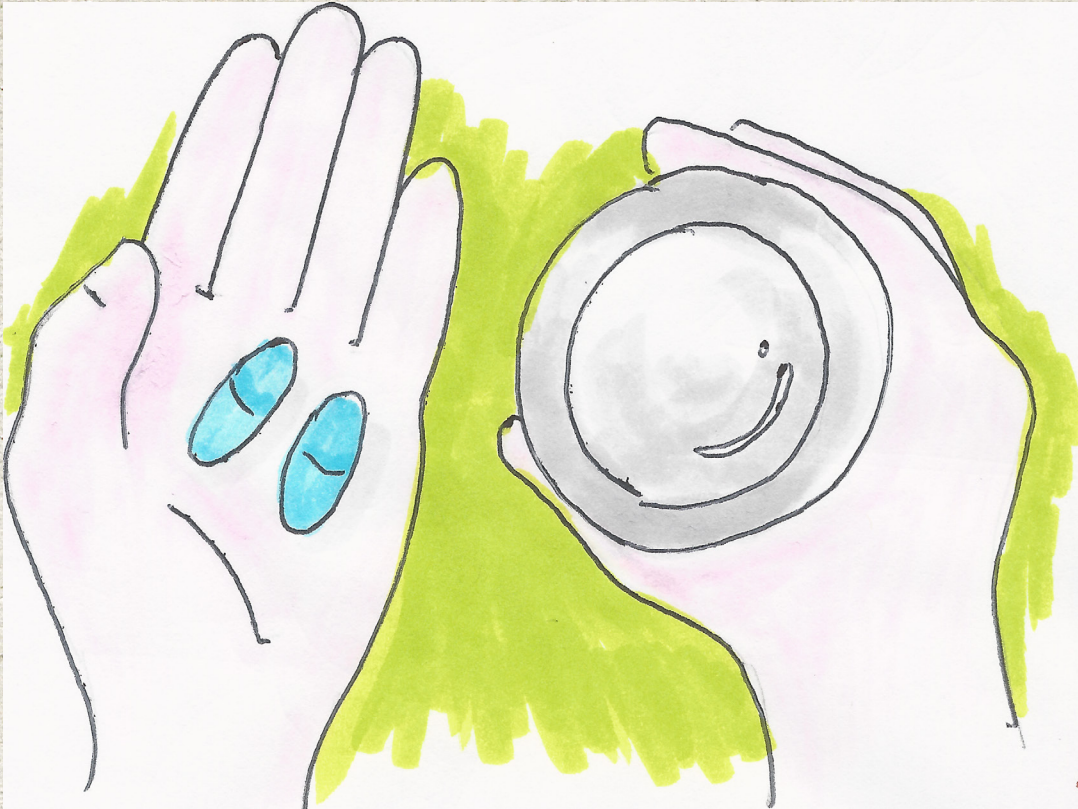
You can take a family member, friend, or someone else with you to the doctor.





The doctor will ask you questions about your feelings. Tell your doctor how you feel.

The doctor may ask you to come back again.



The doctor may ask you to take medicine.

If you are taking medicine for anxiety, ask to see your doctor again in 2-3 months.

He can check to see if the medicine is working.

The doctor may ask you to go see a psychologist, psychiatrist or counsellor.



Psychologists: Psychologists are people you speak to when you are feeling unhappy or upset.

They can help you to understand your feelings or your anxiety.

They can talk to you about your feelings.

Psychologists do not give out medicine.

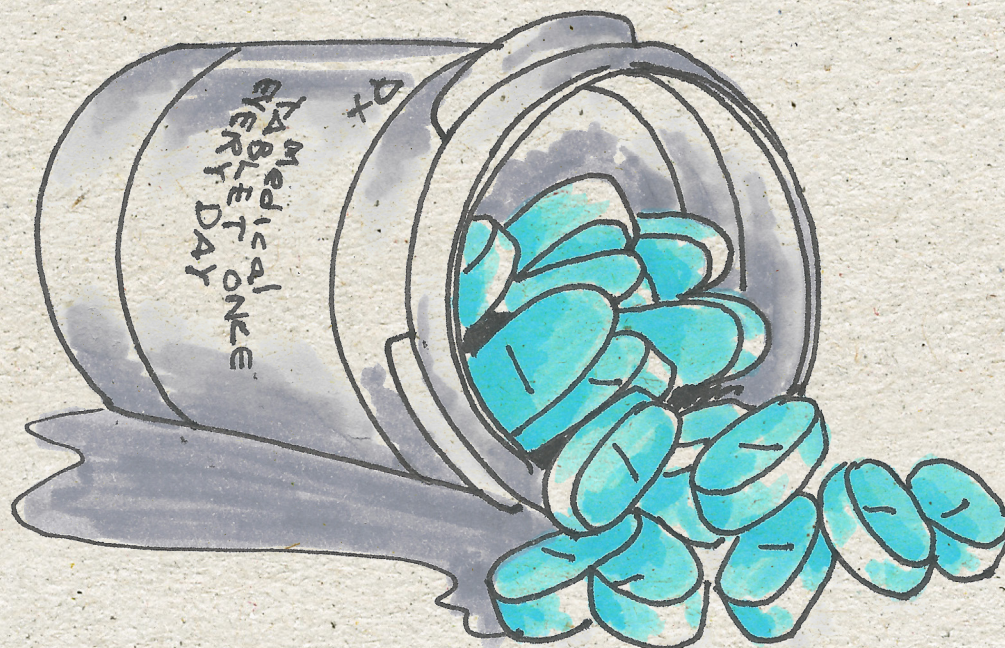


Psychiatrists: Psychiatrists are doctors who help people with serious mental health issues.

They give out medicines that can help people to feel better.

Ask to see the psychiatrist or your doctor again in 2-3 months.

They will check to see if the medicine is working.





Counsellors: Counsellors are people who you talk to about what is upsetting you.

They will try to help you think about how to feel better.

Counsellors do not give out medicine.

**If you think that you
have anxiety speak to
someone you trust.**

If you feel like you want to hurt
yourself, talk to someone you trust
so they can help you.

If you need to speak to someone
now please call:

CHIMO Helpline: 1-888-667-5005

**Canadian Mental Health Association:
(506) 455-5231**



Jennifer's Story

ONE DAY, JENNIFER AND HER OLDER SISTER ANGIE WERE talking about going shopping. Jennifer loved to go to the mall to walk around and look in the stores. Angie asked Jennifer if she would like to learn how to use the bus so that she could go by herself whenever she wanted without having to wait for someone to drive her.

Jennifer said that she would like to but felt very worried about taking the bus.

Angie reminded her that taking the bus was a goal they had talked about. Jennifer had wanted to learn so that she could do more things on her own. She did not want to wait for other people to drive her. She knew that learning to take the bus could make her life much easier and more fun. She would be able to go to the mall by herself.

But when Jennifer thought about getting onto the bus, she felt scared and worried.

She thought about all the people who would be on the bus. She did not know any of the people who would be taking the bus, and this felt strange to Jennifer.

Jennifer was not sure how to tell Angie that she did not want to take the bus. She did not know how to explain her feelings to Angie.

Angie asked Jennifer again, “Hey Jenn, how about we learn to take the bus today”?

Jennifer was silent and shook her head.

Angie sat down beside Jennifer in the living room. Luckily, Angie knew Jennifer well. Angie could tell when something was bothering Jennifer.

Angie asked, “Jenn is there something about taking the bus that scares you?”

“Well”, Jennifer replied, “I am a bit scared of all the people I don’t know on the bus. And what if I get lost and don’t know where to go?”

Angie looked at Jennifer. She saw that Jennifer had some tears in her eyes and that her breathing was heavy.

“When you think about taking the bus, how does it make you feel, Jenn?” Angie asked.

“It makes me feel sick to my stomach and like my heart is beating too fast. It is starting to feel like that right now.”

“Ok, you may be feeling some anxiety, Jenn. Anxiety is completely normal when you are going to do something new. Sometimes anxiety can make you feel strange or sick like you’re feeling now. I want to help you to feel a bit better. Learning to do breathing exercises can help. Can I show you how to do a breathing exercise?”

“Yes”, Jennifer said, still feeling sick.

Angie asked Jennifer to sit in her comfy chair. Jennifer took a deep breath in through her nose and filled her chest with air. She held the breath for 2 seconds and then breathed out slowly counting to 8 as Angie taught her. Angie counted with Jennifer to complete the exercise 10 times.

“Now how do you feel, Jenn?” Angie asked.

“I am much better. I don’t feel sick anymore and my heart slowed down.” “Wow, I am so happy that you’re feeling better, Jenn. How would you feel if we practiced this exercise a couple times a day? Once you get used to it, you can start doing it on your own.”

“That sounds good. I still don’t think I’m ready to take the bus though.”

“That’s ok. Let’s focus for now on our breathing exercise. We can take some smaller steps, first. We could look at the bus schedule. Or make a plan about the steps we have to learn to take the bus. We don’t have to learn the bus route anytime soon, only when you’re ready. I can go with you when you meet the bus driver. He can tell you where your stop is. How does that sound?”

“That sounds good! I am excited to learn the bus someday,” said Jennifer.

References

Canadian Mental Health Association: New Brunswick. (2017). Retrieved from <http://cmhanb.ca>

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). (2004). Depression. Retrieved from http://www.camh.ca/en/hospital/health_information/a_z_mental_health_and_addiction_information/Documents/depression_photonov.pdf

Change.org. (2017). Free Easy Read resources. Retrieved November 07, 2017, from <http://www.changepeople.org/blog/december-2016/free-easy-read-resources>

Chimo Helpline. (2016). Retrieved from <http://www.chimohelpline.ca/home.html>

Easy Read Health Wales. (2017). Retrieved from <https://www.easyreadhealthwales.org.uk/healthy-living/mental-health.asp>

Feeling Down: Looking After My Mental Health. (n.d.). Retrieved November 07, 2017, from <http://www.easyhealth.org.uk>

People First. Information about mental health. Retrieved November 07, 2017, from <http://www.peoplefirstinfo.org.uk/health-and-well-being/easy-read-information-for-people-with-learning-disabilities/information-about-mental-health.aspx>

NBACL. (2016). Supporting People with Dual Diagnosis; Module 1: Intellectual Disability, Mental Health and Rights Based Approaches. E-Book. Retrieved from <https://nbacl.nb.ca/module-pages/intellectual-disability-mental-health-and-rights-based-approaches>

Welcome to Inspired Services Publishing, Ltd. (n.d.). Retrieved November 07, 2017, from <http://www.inspiredservices.org.uk/>

Not Just Talk

WHAT IS ANXIETY?

AN EASY TO READ GUIDE



**New Brunswick
Association For
Community Living**

**Association du
Nouveau-Brunswick
pour l'intégration
communautaire**