

Women Working Well in the Wharf 6.2.2025

Stress and Anxiety at work: How can God give us peace at work?

Stress in the workplace

What is Anxiety?

FEAR that **something is going to go wrong** in the future.

FEAR that **I won't be able to cope** with what happens in the future.

Wishing I could **control** the future.

An over-developed **sense of responsibility** for the future.

→Now and again or mood music of our lives.

A “state” of anxiety may include:

- a mind that buzzes around,
- a low (or high!) -level feeling that things are not ok
- a sick feeling in the pit of our stomach
- having trouble switching off
- constantly running from one thing to the next
- constantly flustered
- struggling to sleep at nights
- habitual checking of our phone.

What sorts of behaviours do people exhibit in response to anxieties?

- 1) Controlling
- 2) Demanding
- 3) Procrastination
- 4) Paralysis

→These work for a time but are ultimately counter productive.

Think on your own, or with others round you, about an anxiety you have.

What can you see of “fear of the future” in it?

What kinds of behaviour(s) have you exhibited in response to that anxiety? (Try to be honest!)

So how can we bring in some good news from the Lord to help us with our anxious hearts?

Psalm 27

Of David.

¹The Lord is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?
²When evildoers assail me
to eat up my flesh,
my adversaries and foes,
it is they who stumble and fall.
³Though an army encamp against me,
my heart shall not fear;
though war arise against me,
yet I will be confident.
⁴One thing have I asked of the Lord,
that will I seek after:
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,
to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord
and to enquire in his temple.
⁵For he will hide me in his shelter
in the day of trouble;
he will conceal me under the cover of his tent;
he will lift me high upon a rock.
⁶And now my head shall be lifted up
above my enemies all round me,
and I will offer in his tent
sacrifices with shouts of joy;

I will sing and make melody to the Lord.
⁷Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud;
be gracious to me and answer me!
⁸You have said, “Seek my face.”
My heart says to you,
“Your face, Lord, do I seek.”
⁹ Hide not your face from me.
Turn not your servant away in anger,
O you who have been my help.
Cast me not off; forsake me not,
O God of my salvation!
¹⁰For my father and my mother have forsaken
me,
but the Lord will take me in.
¹¹Teach me your way, O Lord,
and lead me on a level path
because of my enemies.
¹²Give me not up to the will of my adversaries;
for false witnesses have risen against me,
and they breathe out violence.
¹³I believe that I shall look upon the goodness
of the Lord
in the land of the living!
¹⁴Wait for the Lord;
be strong, and let your heart take courage;
wait for the Lord!

1)God is for me, so I can live confidently (v1-3)

Discuss:

What do you think your most fundamental view of God is?

Can you see in your heart elements of fearing He is against you?

2)God is with me, so I can cope with whatever comes (v4-9)

Discuss:

1. Can you think of a difficult situation at work in the past that you've prayed about?
2. Were you conscious of God working in that situation? Even if not, how did it turn out?
3. How did you cope with the situation you found difficult? Can you see God helping you with it now it is over?

3)My future is safe in God's hands (v10-14)

Reflection questions:

1) How does it help you to know your future is safe in God's hands?

2) Is there any situation at work at the moment causing you stress, fear or anxiety? What element of Psalm 27 could help you with that?

God has made us WHOLE people

Relationships:

Body:

John 4:6

Mark 4

Mind:

Romans 12:2 “be transformed by the renewal of your mind.”

2 Corinthians 10:5 “We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.”

So the moment comes, and we are feeling anxious. What do we do?

Think of having a toolbox and trying different tools.

These first two are always where to start:

Pray to cast our anxieties on the Lord, as we’re told to do in Scripture.

Remember a key Bible verse.

What if I still feel anxious after prayer and the Bible?

Remember you’re a WHOLE person!

-Distraction

When at work:

Go away from your desk for a walk?

Arrange to meet a friend for lunch?

Take 5 mins out in the loo to do some breathing exercises to help calm you.

You know!

When not at work:

Put on a podcast?

Put on some music and dance around the kitchen?

Go for a run?

Cook a meal?

→Find out what works for you!

-Spot unhelpful thinking patterns

Bring thoughts in line with the truth.

Sheet of common unhelpful thinking habits

-What advice would you give someone else?

-Talk and pray with a friend

-most useful if we're genuinely open to challenge.

-Try to learn to spot the signs of when you are getting into a "state" of anxiety.

-Be careful of what you are filling your mind and heart with.

Philippians 4:8,9 "Whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me – practise these things, and the God of peace will be with you."

Are devices really helping you?

Reflection time

How do you currently seek to cope in the moment of anxiety?

Which of the suggestions of what to do most connected with you?

Which unhelpful thinking patterns are you prone to?

Recommended book and devotionals:

"Daily strength" – SGM Lifewords

"Complete Surrender" – devotional by Zia Wilder Muller

Christian songs I find help me when anxious:










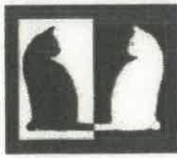
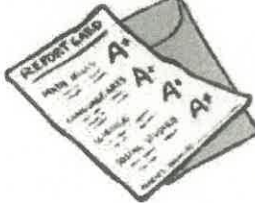
He will hold me fast – Keith and Kristyn Getty

I will glory in my Redeemer – Sovereign Grace

A Christian's daily prayer – Sovereign Grace

Unhelpful Thinking Habits

Over the years, we tend to get into unhelpful thinking habits such as those described below. We might favour some over others, and there might be some that seem far too familiar. Once you can identify your unhelpful thinking styles, you can start to notice them – they very often occur just before and during distressing situations. Once you can notice them, then that can help you to challenge or distance yourself from those thoughts, and see the situation in a different and more helpful way. *Blue text (italics) helps us find alternative, more realistic thoughts.*

 <p>Mental Filter - When we notice only what the filter allows or wants us to notice, and we dismiss anything that doesn't 'fit'. Like looking through dark blinkers or 'gloomy specs', or only catching the negative stuff in our 'kitchen strainers' whilst anything more positive or realistic is dismissed. <i>Am I only noticing the bad stuff? Am I filtering out the positives? Am I wearing those 'gloomy specs'? What would be more realistic?</i></p>	 <p>Judgements - Making evaluations or judgements about events, ourselves, others, or the world, rather than describing what we actually see and have evidence for. <i>I'm making an evaluation about the situation or person. It's how I make sense of the world, but that doesn't mean my judgements are always right or helpful. Is there another perspective?</i></p>
<p>Prediction - Believing we know what's going to happen in the future. <i>Am I thinking that I can predict the future? How likely is it that that might really happen?</i></p> 	<p>Emotional Reasoning - I feel bad so it must be bad! I feel anxious, so I must be in danger. <i>Just because it feels bad, doesn't necessary mean it is bad. My feelings are just a reaction to my thoughts – and thoughts are just automatic brain reflexes</i></p> 
<p>Mind-Reading - Assuming we know what others are thinking (usually about us). <i>Am I assuming I know what others are thinking? What's the evidence? Those are my own thoughts, not theirs. Is there another, more balanced way of looking at it?</i></p> 	<p>Mountains and Molehills Exaggerating the risk of danger, or the negatives. Minimising the odds of how things are most likely to turn out, or minimising positives. <i>Am I exaggerating the bad stuff? How would someone else see it? What's the bigger picture?</i></p> 
<p>Compare and despair Seeing only the good and positive aspects in others, and getting upset when comparing ourselves negatively against them. <i>Am I doing that 'compare and despair' thing? What would be a more balanced and helpful way of looking at it?</i></p> 	<p>Catastrophising - Imagining and believing that the worst possible thing will happen. <i>OK, thinking that the worst possible thing will definitely happen isn't really helpful right now. What's most likely to happen?</i></p> 
<p>Critical self Putting ourselves down, self-criticism, blaming ourselves for events or situations that are not (totally) our responsibility. <i>There I go, that internal bully's at it again. Would most people who really know me say that about me? Is this something that I am totally responsible for?</i></p> 	<p>Black and white thinking - Believing that something or someone can be only good or bad, right or wrong, rather than anything in-between or 'shades of grey'. <i>Things aren't either totally white or totally black – there are shades of grey. Where is this on the spectrum?</i></p> 
<p>Shoulds and musts - Thinking or saying 'I should' (or shouldn't) and 'I must' puts pressure on ourselves, and sets up unrealistic expectations. <i>Am I putting more pressure on myself, setting up expectations of myself that are almost impossible? What would be more realistic?</i></p> 	<p>Memories - Current situations and events can trigger upsetting memories, leading us to believe that the danger is here and now, rather than in the past, causing us to distress right now. <i>This is just a reminder of the past. That was then, and this is now. Even though this memory makes me <u>feel</u> upset, it's not <u>actually</u> happening again right now.</i></p> 