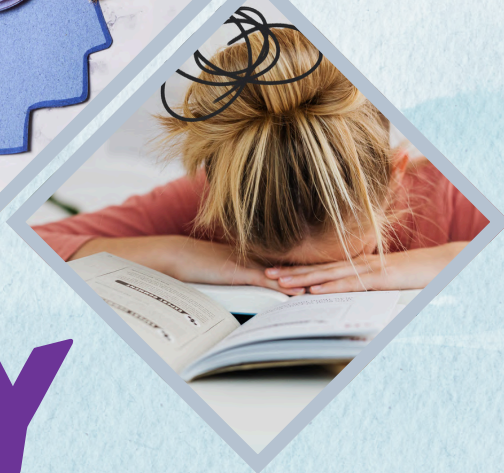




**KASHMIR CARE<sup>®</sup>**  
**FOUNDATION**  
Humanity Always....Education First!



# ANXIETY

## “Self-Help” Module

*Designed by:*  
**Dr. Mir Zahoor Gul**

*Developed by:*

**sāwab**  
Supporting Always Wholeheartedly, All Broken-hearted

*(Brain and Behavior Science Academy)*

*September, 2025*



# TEAM SAWAB

**"Supporting Always All Broken Hearted"**

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The Self-Help Anxiety Module has been developed by the **SAWAB** exclusively for educational and self-awareness purposes. **The Kashmir Care Foundation** has provided support to SAWAB for the production of this module.

The contents of this module are designed to provide a basic understanding, awareness, and guidance on mental health-related topics. However, **it should not be considered a substitute for seeking professional mental health care, diagnosis, or treatment.**

If you are experiencing persistent anxiety, emotional distress, difficulty functioning in daily life, or are struggling to manage your symptoms, **we strongly encourage you to seek support from qualified mental health professionals, including psychiatrists and clinical psychologists.** Your well-being is of utmost importance, and timely professional help is available.

If you have any **questions, suggestions, or feedback** regarding this module, please contact SAWAB at **officialsawab3@gmail.com**.

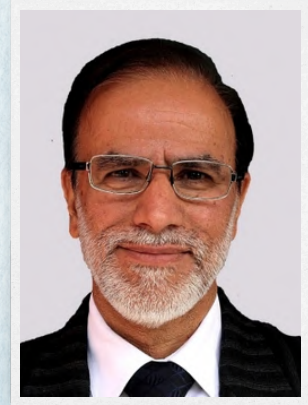
If you have comments about the ongoing and planned initiatives of the Kashmir Care Foundation (KCF), please contact KCF at **info@kashmircarefoundation.org**

**SAWAB &  
Kashmir Care Foundation**



## “Taking Care of your ANXIETY”

In regions like Kashmir, where the rhythms of daily life are shaped not only by nature’s beauty but by the weight of conflict, education is more than a right—it is a form of healing. This Anxiety - Self Help Manual is born from the understanding that mental health and education are inseparable threads in the fabric of resilience. When young minds are nurtured in safe, supportive environments, they do not just learn—they begin to heal, grow, and imagine new futures.



This guide is both a call to action and a tool for change. It offers practical strategies and compassionate insight for educators, caregivers, and community leaders committed to restoring hope where it is most needed. In these pages lies a quiet revolution—one that begins in classrooms, continues in hearts, and echoes through generations.

Let this be a step toward building not just schools, but sanctuaries of strength.

With Care,

**Prof. (Dr.) Mushtaq Ahmad Margoob**  
(MD - Psychiatry)



## Glossary for Keywords

- **APA (American Psychological Association):** Sets standards for psychology research, writing, and ethics.
- **WHO (World Health Organization):** UN agency focused on global public health.
- **Neurotransmitter:** Chemical messenger in the brain transmitting signals between nerve cells.
- **GABA (Gamma-Aminobutyric Acid):** Neurotransmitter that reduces nerve activity and promotes calmness.
- **Trigger:** Stimulus that initiates a strong emotional or physical reaction.
- **Case Vignettes:** Short patient stories describing history, symptoms, and treatment for learning.
- **Tele MANAS (Tele Mental Health Assistance and National Action for Suicide Prevention):** A national tele-counseling service providing mental health support and suicide prevention via phone or online.



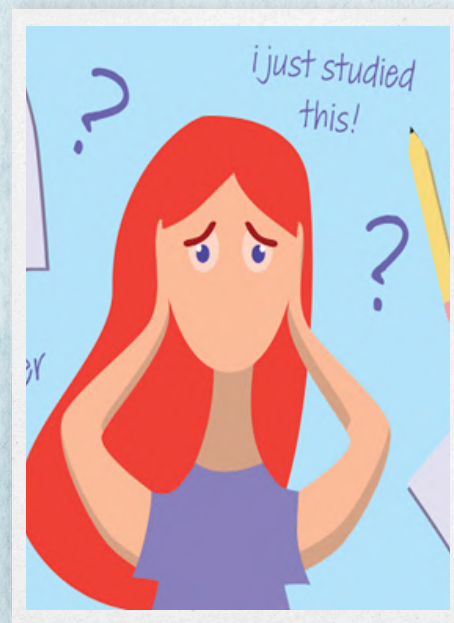
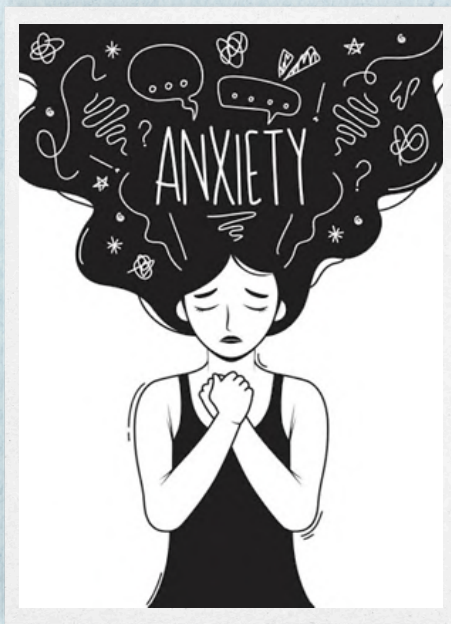
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## Understanding Anxiety

Anxiety is an emotion characterised by apprehension and somatic symptoms of tension in which an individual anticipates impending danger, catastrophe, or misfortune (American Psychological Association, 2018). In other words, anxiety is that feeling of nervousness, worry, or unease we feel before significant events. While a little anxiety can actually be helpful by keeping us motivated and focused, it becomes a problem when it's persistent or intense.



Anxiety can interfere with daily life, affecting our mental and physical well-being, and that's when we need to manage it more carefully. Ever felt super nervous before a test, even though you spent hours studying? That's test anxiety. Your heart starts racing, your hands get sweaty, your mind goes blank, and suddenly, it's hard to remember anything—even the stuff you knew well. Or maybe you've wanted to answer a question or share your thoughts in class but held back because you were scared of being judged or saying the wrong thing.

That's social anxiety. You might overthink what others will think of you, feel your chest tighten, or worry about embarrassing yourself. Both experiences are more common than you'd think—and they're totally valid.



## Signs and Symptoms

Anxiety can show up in many ways—through your body, your thoughts, and even how you act. It's not always obvious, but noticing the signs and symptoms can really help.

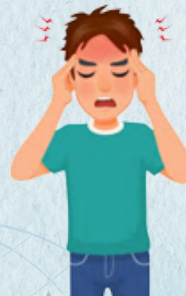
### Physical Symptoms



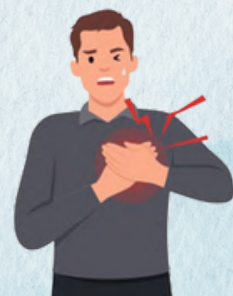
Fast, irregular, or noticeable heartbeat



Feeling dizzy or lightheaded



Headaches



Chest pain or tightness



Shortness of breath



Nausea or retching



Sweating



Urinary urgency and frequency



Feeling hot or flushed



Shaking or trembling



Abdominal pain and bloating



## ▶ Mental Symptoms



Feeling tense or nervous



Unable to relax



Constant worry about the past or future



Feeling tearful or emotional



Trouble sleeping



Difficulty focusing



Not able to sit still



Difficulty in decision making

## ▶ Changes in Behaviors



Not enjoying hobbies or downtime



Fidgeting



Avoidance of places that trigger anxiety



Irritability on minor issues



Withdrawal from people whom we love



## ▶ What Causes Anxiety?

### ▶ Life Events

Sometimes, anxiety comes when students face too many pressures at once—like tough exams, a fight with a friend, interpersonal issues, issues with parents and worries at home. For example, a student might feel overwhelmed if they have a science test, haven't spoken to their best friend after an argument, and also hear their parents arguing at home. All this together can make them feel anxious.



### ▶ Past Experiences

Students can become anxious because of something that happened earlier. For instance, if a student was laughed at during a class presentation once, they may feel very nervous or scared the next time they're asked to speak in front of others.



### ▶ Thinking Styles

Some students tend to always expect the worst. For example, if they get a low grade on one quiz, they might think they'll fail the whole subject, even if it's not true. This kind of thinking keeps their brain stuck in worry mode and makes it hard to relax.



### ▶ Evolutionary Reasons

Anxiety is actually the body's way of protecting us from danger. Back in the past, this helped humans escape wild animals. In school life, the same response can kick in before a big test or competition—your heart races, you sweat, and you can't sit still. It's your body trying to get ready, even if there's no real danger.



### ▶ Biological Reasons

Some students are more prone to anxiety because of their family background—if a parent or sibling struggles with anxiety, it can be partly genetic and partly learned through observation. On a biological level, brain chemicals called neurotransmitters also play a key role.



Low levels of serotonin, which helps regulate mood, can make someone feel more anxious. A lack of GABA, a calming neurotransmitter, can make it harder for the brain to relax. High levels of norepinephrine, which prepares the body for stress, can lead to feeling constantly on edge. These imbalances can make someone feel anxious more easily, even without a clear trigger.

**What is GABA?**



LADY GABA !

## ▶ How Common Is Anxiety?

Anxiety disorders are the most common mental health conditions worldwide—about 4% of people globally are affected, which was around 301 million people in 2019 (WHO, 2023). Women are more likely to experience anxiety than men—about 1.66 times more. For instance, the lifetime rate of Generalized Anxiety Disorder is 5.3% for women and 2.8% for men (APA, 2023).

In Jammu and Kashmir, 5.1% of the population deals with anxiety disorders (Hussain et al., 2024). Among adolescents, the rates are even higher—35.8% show high levels of anxiety, and 30.5% are at borderline levels (Qounsar & Parveen, 2018).

## ▶ Types of Anxiety Disorder

Anxiety can take various forms, and understanding the different types can help in recognising and managing it more effectively.

### ▶ 1. Specific Phobias

These are intense fears of certain things like the dark, animals, or loud noises. Most children grow out of them with time and reassurance.



### ▶ 2. Social Anxiety



This involves a strong fear of being judged or embarrassed in social situations. Children may avoid speaking in class or participating in group activities.



### ▶ 3. Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)

Students with GAD worry about many areas of life—like school, health, or the future—even when there’s no clear reason for concern.



### ▶ 4. Separation Anxiety

Common in younger children, this occurs when they become very distressed when separated from parents or caregivers.



### ▶ 5. Panic Disorder

Involves sudden and intense episodes of fear, known as panic attacks, which may include physical symptoms like a racing heart or difficulty breathing



## ▶ Managing Anxiety: A Simple Guide for Students

### ▶ Understanding Anxiety

Anxiety is like a false alarm in your brain—it makes you feel in danger even when you're safe. Learning how it works (like the fight-or-flight response) helps you realize it's just your body overreacting. When you know what's happening, it feels less scary (as seen in Cases 1, 2, and 3)



### ▶ Noticing What Triggers You

Everyone has different triggers—like exams, fights with friends, or being called on in class. Start noticing what situations make you feel anxious. Once you know your triggers, you can plan how to handle them better next time (as seen in Cases 1 and 2) noticing one's thought process solves most of the anxiety issues.





## ➤ Challenging Negative Thoughts

Anxiety often makes you think things like “I’ll fail” or “Everyone’s judging me.” But these thoughts aren’t always true. Ask yourself: “What’s the evidence?” or “What would I say to a friend who felt this way?” It helps you see the situation more clearly (as seen in Case 3)



## ➤ Solving Problems Step-by-Step

Sometimes we get anxious because things feel out of control—like a big assignment or group project. Break it into smaller steps (e.g., research → outline → write). Solving things bit by bit makes it less overwhelming (as seen in Case 1 and 3)



## ➤ Relaxing Your Mind and Body

Try deep breathing, listening to nature’s calming cues, stretching, or taking a short walk. These simple things can help your body feel safe again—like hitting a reset button when you’re stressed before a test or presentation (as seen in Cases 1, 2 and 3)



## ➤ Facing Fears Slowly

Avoiding scary things (like giving a presentation or talking to a teacher) can make the fear worse. Start small—maybe speak up in a small group first. Facing your fears step-by-step helps you feel more confident over time (as seen in Case 3).



## ▶ Working with the thoughts

A helpful technique in managing anxiety is establishing a “Worry Window.” Rather than attempting to suppress anxious thoughts, you allow yourself to acknowledge them at a specific time. This approach helps you gain control over your anxiety and prevents it from intruding into other areas of your life.





**Example:** If a student is feeling overwhelmed by upcoming exams, they might schedule their Worry Window from 6:00–6:20 p.m. During this period, they write down their concerns and explore potential solutions. Outside of this time, they commit to focusing on their studies or engaging in relaxation, knowing they'll return to their worries later

## Breathing Exercises for Anxiety

### 1. Belly Breathing (Diaphragmatic Breathing)

- Sit or lie down in a comfy position.
- Place one hand on your belly and the other on your chest.
- Breathe in slowly through your nose—feel your belly rise.
- Breathe out through pursed lips—feel your belly fall.
- Try this for 5–10 minutes.
- It helps slow down your heart rate & relaxes your nervous system.
- You'll feel more grounded and physically at ease.
- Great for anytime you feel tense or overwhelmed.



### 2. 4-7-8 Breathing

- Sit up straight and rest your tongue behind your upper teeth.
- Breathe out completely through your mouth with a "whoosh."
- Inhale through your nose for 4 seconds.
- Hold your breath for 7 seconds.
- Exhale through your mouth for 8 seconds with a "whoosh."
- Repeat this for 4–8 rounds.
- It's amazing for calming anxiety and helping you sleep.
- Think of it like hitting a reset button for your mind.

### 3. Grounding with the Five Senses

When anxiety hits and you feel out of touch with reality, this technique can bring you right back. Just pause and look around. Name five things you can see, four things you can feel, three things you can hear, two you can smell, and one you can taste. It sounds simple, but it's surprisingly powerful. It brings your awareness into the present moment, pulling you out of your head and into your surroundings.





## 4. The STOP Technique

This is like you're in-the-moment anxiety toolkit.

When you feel overwhelmed, remember:

- Stop what you're doing.
- Take a breath.
- Observe what's going on—inside and outside.
- Proceed with awareness.

That little pause can be powerful. It helps break the autopilot reaction and gives you a moment to reset and choose how you respond.



- STOP
- TAKE A BREATH
- OBERVE (what's going on inside)
- PROCEED (in a helpful way)

## 5. Guided Imagery Meditation

Ever daydreamed your way into feeling peaceful? That's the idea here. Close your eyes and imagine a place where you feel totally safe—maybe a forest, beach, or cozy room. Picture the details: the sounds, smells, colors, and textures. Let yourself stay there for a while. Your brain responds to imagery almost like it's real. It can be especially soothing before bed or during panic.



## 6. Mindful Breathing

This is the simplest and most steadying technique. Just sit quietly and notice your breath. No need to change it—just observe. Feel it come in, feel it go out. When your mind wanders (and it will), just bring it back kindly. That's it. It's like building a quiet home base you can return to anytime—especially helpful when the world feels loud.



## 7. Mindful Walking

If sitting still isn't your thing, mindful walking is perfect. As you walk, notice how your body moves—your feet touching the ground, your breath syncing with your steps, the sounds and smells around you. Walk a bit slower than usual. It turns a simple walk into a calming, moving meditation. Great for clearing your head and grounding your energy.



## Case Vignette: 01

A 16 year old female student from an urban settings in Kashmir , was brought by her parents to a community mental health care facility after weeks of terrifying episodes—sudden breathlessness, palpitations, trembling, and a gripping sense of doom that left her collapsed and drained. Sometimes, after the panic, she'd go unresponsive, eyes open but blank—lost in dissociation(separation of some aspects of mental functioning from conscious awareness), with no memory of the event.



Despite multiple hospital visits and clear medical reports, her symptoms worsened. Her school authorities advised her to stay home, and her family, desperate and confused, turned to faith healers who suspected nazar and possession. Nothing worked—until a relative urged them to seek psychological help. Her condition, panic disorder, with her mind's desperate response to emotional overload, responded very well to professional intervention—psychoeducation and other anxiety management techniques.

She slowly began to feel safe again. Her family joined sessions to learn how to support without reinforcing the dysfunctional behaviour .A school report was shared to help with reintegration. Over time, therapy uncovered the emotional root: a painful fallout with her best friend. Using psychotherapeutic tools, emotional processing, and validation, she began healing. Four months later, she is back in school, managing well, and no longer defined by her symptoms—but by the quiet strength she's built through recovery.



## Case Vignette: 02

A 16 year old girl from rural Kashmir was referred by a gastroenterologist for persistent stomachaches that worsened during stress. On evaluation, the mental health professional team discovered she was in the preparatory phase of her Class 10 board exams. An only child, she had lost her mother to surgical complications at age 13 and struggled with grief, isolation, and emotional withdrawal.



Her father's remarriage and emotionally distant parenting, coupled with high academic expectations and constant comparisons, led to escalating anticipatory anxiety. By the time she entered Grade 10, she experienced intense fear of failure, academic pressure, somatic complaints, insomnia, and eventually self-harm.

She was found to have severe anticipatory anxiety with depressive symptoms and emerging personality issues, rooted in unresolved loss and familial dynamics. Management with low dose of medication and psychoeducation and behavioral activation empowered her to rebuild daily structure and resilience. A crucial family intervention helped restructure relational dynamics—her father's increased emotional availability marked a turning point. Over time, her bodily symptoms resolved, self-harm ceased, and she appeared for her board exams, scoring 450 marks. Her greatest progress, however, was in psychological recovery—she emerged with restored self-worth, emotional insight, and renewed social functioning.



## Case Vignette: 03

An 18-year-old male from an educated and well-settled family from an urban setting — both parents in government job — presented with school refusal just before his 12th grade internal examinations. Despite being a high achiever with 99% marks in a reputed high school, he had recently started avoiding school and expressed intense anxiety about appearing for exams. During the initial session with the clinical psychologist, he shared that his fear was not of failure, but of forgetting everything during the exam. He recalled similar anxiety beginning in Class 11, which he never disclosed to his family. His emotional outpouring suggested chronic internal distress masked by academic excellence.

A deeper exploration of his study habits revealed longstanding obsessive patterns —studying only in isolation, excessive re-reading, rewriting, and erasing due to persistent doubts about forgetting. These behaviors, once mistaken for perfectionism or academic discipline, were understood as compulsions— repetitive acts performed to reduce anxiety triggered by intrusive thoughts. The therapist explained the nature of the problem as a condition characterised by unwanted, intrusive thoughts like “What if I forget?” and acts like re-reading or erasing done to neutralize the distress.

Using simple psychoeducation tools the therapist helped the student and family understand how anxiety fuels this loop. With this awareness and reassurance, he began to feel seen and supported. In a key therapeutic gesture, the therapist accompanied him to the exam hall as a grounding presence. He completed the paper successfully, emerged tearful yet relieved, and eventually topped his class. Now pursuing MBBS, he continues to function well with improved insight, though occasional intrusive thoughts remain.





## Quick Self-Test: Understanding Anxiety

01 Which of the following is **NOT** a common symptom of anxiety?

- a) Palpitations (fast heartbeat)
- b) Excessive sweating
- c) Sudden fever
- d) Restlessness

02 **True or False:**

Avoiding situations that make you anxious is the best long-term solution to reduce anxiety.

03 Which of these is an example of a healthy coping strategy for anxiety?

- a) Deep breathing exercises
- b) Regular physical activity
- c) Talking to a supportive person
- d) All of the above

04 **Fill in the blank:**

Anxiety becomes a disorder when it is \_\_\_\_\_ and interferes with daily functioning.

05 Which professional should you consult if anxiety symptoms are severe and persistent?

- a) Dentist
- b) Psychiatrist/Psychologist
- c) Cardiologist
- d) Rheumatologist

06 **True or False:**

Feeling anxious before an exam or job interview is always a sign of an anxiety disorder.

### Answer Key:

1. c) Sudden fever; 2. False; 3. d) All of the above; 4. Excessive/persistent; 5. b) Psychiatrist/Psychologist; 6. False



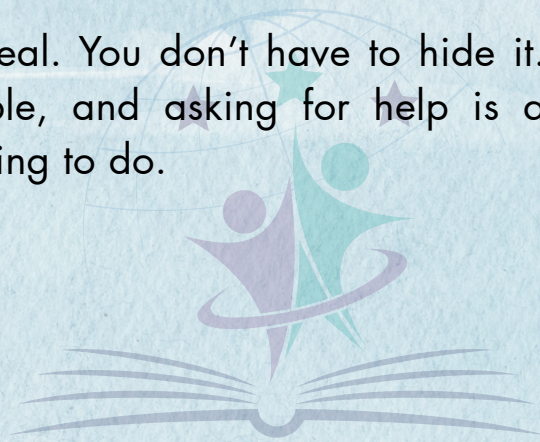
## For parents:

If your child seems overly worried, avoids situations, or complains of frequent stress-related body aches — offer support and seek help early from professional mental professionals.



## For individuals:

What you feel is real. You don't have to hide it. Support is available, and asking for help is a smart and brave thing to do.





## ▶ Pathways to seek help

Sometimes you might feel nervous all the time, find it hard to relax, or overthink small things. You may feel tense in your body or have trouble sleeping, eating, or focusing. These feelings can build up — and that's when it's important to pause and ask for help. You don't have to go through this alone.



At the community level, mental health services are available and should be contacted to seek professional help. The government has established facilities that provide both psychiatric and psychological care across different tiers, including primary health centers, district hospitals, and medical colleges.

In Srinagar District, specialized mental health services are available at the **Center for Child Guidance and Well-being (CGWC)** at **SMHS Hospital** and at **SKIMS Hospital, Bemina, Srinagar**.



**Call Tele-MANAS: 14416/18008914416**

**It's free, government helpline**, and there are **trained mental health counsellors** who will simply listen and help you feel more at ease.



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