

Stress and Anxiety

Stress can help us remain motivated and focused. It's normal to get stressed or anxious sometimes, such as before an exam or sports match, or when you're in danger or feeling threatened. However, too much stress can cause problems.

As an international student, you may feel more anxious than usual. Many things are likely to be new to you, and if English is your second language you may not understand everything that is being said. You may also feel lonely and be missing your family and friends from home.

While these feelings of stress and anxiety may be unsettling, they're unlikely to last for long. If they do persist, and begin to affect your daily life at school and home, it's important to tell someone.

If your anxiety gets so bad that you begin to think life is not worth going on with, or that everyone would be better off without you, seek help immediately.

Symptoms of anxiety

The symptoms of anxiety differ between people, but can include feeling irritable and unable to relax. You may be struggling to concentrate, or find you get upset or angry more easily than usual.

You may have repeated negative thoughts, or even think you're losing your mind or that something terrible will happen to you.

You may also have physical symptoms, such as:

- feeling constantly tired
- shortness of breath or the feeling that you're choking
- a tight chest
- trembling or shaking
- sleeping too little or too much
- sore stomach or headaches
- sweating
- changes in eating habits
- confusion and finding it hard to make decisions
- the need to carry out certain tasks repetitively, such as washing your hands.

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Types of anxiety

Anxiety is very common, and most people will experience it at some stage.

There are many types of anxiety.

If your feelings of anxiety have continued for six months or more, you may have generalised anxiety disorder.

If you notice your heart is beating fast, you are unable to breathe, you are shaking and feel dizzy, it may feel like you're having a heart attack but you're probably having a panic attack. They can be very frightening, and do not usually go away without help.

If you have lost your confidence and have started making excuses not to see your friends after school or on weekends, you may have social anxiety.

Where to go for help

Talking to someone about your thoughts and feelings can help you overcome your anxiety.

You could talk to the international staff, or see your school counsellor or a doctor. The international staff or your homestay family can help you make an appointment.

If your symptoms are mild, you could also try:

- exercising for at least half an hour a day
- eating a well-balanced diet
- developing good sleeping habits
- limiting your coffee intake, as the caffeine in coffee can increase anxiety
- taking time out to do something you enjoy, such as listening to music or doing yoga.

Useful resources

You might find these apps, helplines, online therapy tools and resources useful.

[Sparx](#)

[Youthline](#)

[Aunty Dee](#)

[The Lowdown](#)

[Common Ground](#)

[Depression.org.nz](#)

[Mental Health Foundation](#)

[Southern Cross](#)