

Understanding your Mind & Emotions

What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is your body's way of keeping you safe — it's a natural response to stress or perceived danger.

You might feel it as racing thoughts, a tight chest, restlessness, or stomach tension.

It becomes a problem when it sticks around even when there's no real threat.

The goal isn't to *get rid* of anxiety, but to learn how to manage and respond to it gently.

Fight, flight, freeze, fawn – what's that about?

These are your nervous system's automatic survival responses to stress or danger:

- **Fight:** Argue, lash out, or get defensive
- **Flight:** Run away or avoid
- **Freeze:** Shut down or go numb
- **Fawn:** People-please or try to fix everything to stay safe

They're not weaknesses — they're instincts. Recognising them helps you respond with more compassion.

What is the “Window of Tolerance?”

It's the zone where your brain and body feel calm and balanced — where you can think clearly and handle emotions.

When you're *outside* this window, you might:

- Feel overwhelmed, anxious, panicky (hyperarousal)
- Feel numb, disconnected, exhausted (hypoarousal)

Grounding tools and nervous system support can help widen your window over time.

How does Trauma affect the Brain?

Trauma can make the brain stay stuck in “survival mode,” even long after the threat is gone.

It can shrink the brain's calm centre (prefrontal cortex), heighten the alarm system (amygdala), and disrupt memory and emotion processing (hippocampus).

This is why small things might feel *huge* — your brain is just trying to protect you.

Healing is possible — with support, the brain can rewire itself.

What's the difference between an emotion and a mood?

Emotions are quick and specific (like sadness after bad news).

Moods are more general and long-lasting (like feeling low all day without knowing why).

Recognising which you're feeling can help you choose the right support — a grounding tool, rest, or reflection.