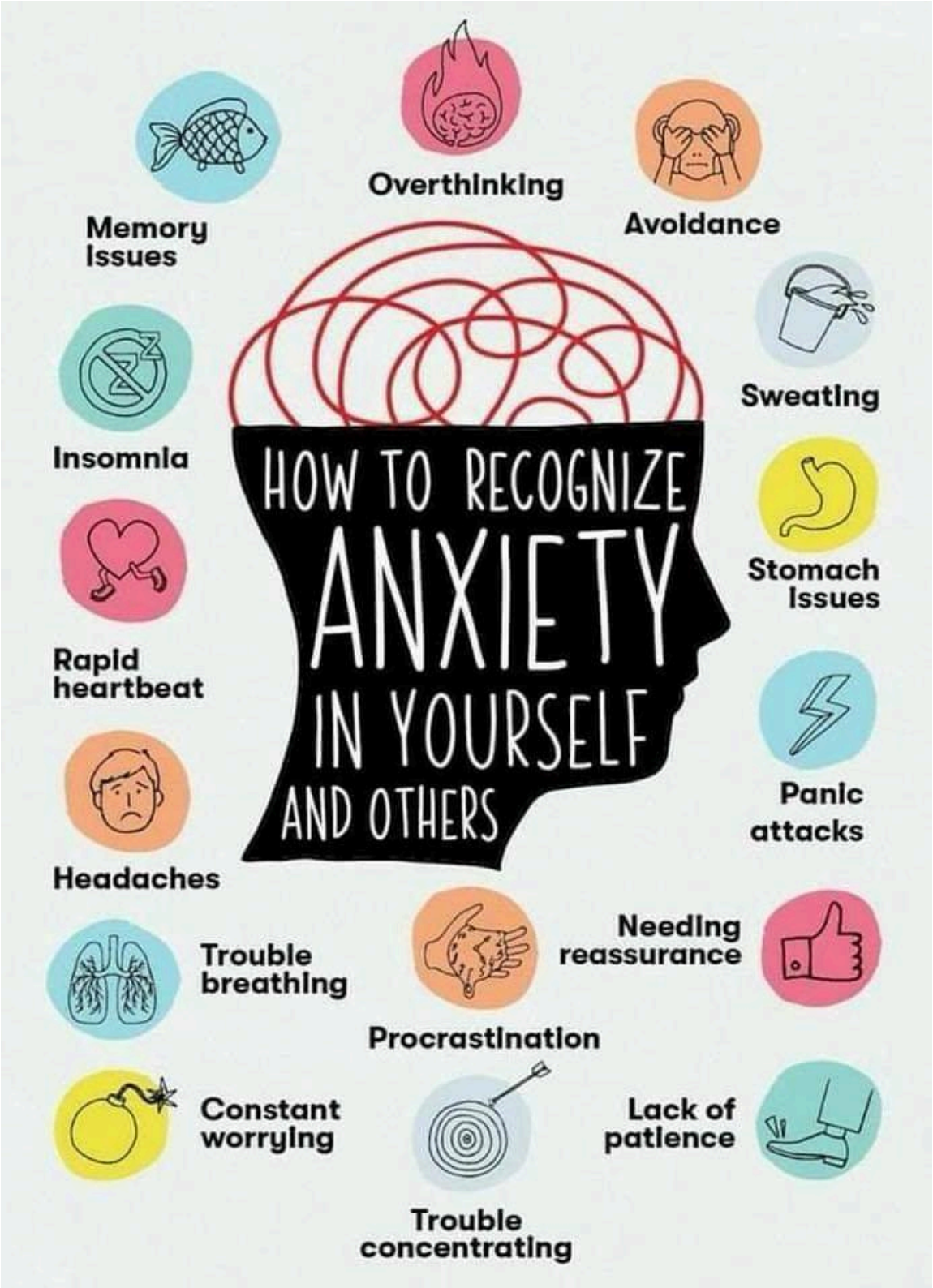
THE AMBULANCE STAFF CHARITY

Caring for those who care for us

Managing anxiety and panic attacks



Panic attacks cause an increase in adrenaline, so it is important to reduce your adrenaline and anxiety levels. There are three main types of techniques for coping with panic attack: **breathing, relaxation and distraction.**

As everyone is different it is important you find the right techniques for you.

Breathing

When people feel stressed and anxious, they tend to breathe too quickly, which can lead to a panic attack. Good breathing techniques can help to reduce and control the breathing which can subsequently calm you down and reduce anxiety levels.

1. Breathe in through nose for 4 seconds
2. Hold for 2 seconds
3. Breathe out through mouth for 6 seconds
4. Place hand on chest to feel the rise and fall with each breath
5. Count each breath in your mind "In 2, 3, 4, Hold 1, 2, Out 2, 3, 4, 5, 6"
6. Repeat 10 times

Relaxation

This exercise will teach you to recognise and reduce muscle tension. You can relieve tension in any part of your body just by tensing and relaxing each muscle in turn.

1. Find a quiet place and sit comfortably
2. Tense each part of your body for a few seconds then relax. Start with your feet, legs, abdomen, shoulders, arms and finish with your hands
3. Notice the tension leaving each part of your body which should feel lighter and relaxed. Enjoy this feeling

Distraction

This exercise involves using an image to focus the mind.

1. Create in your mind an ideal spot to relax. It could be real or imaginary, somewhere you will find restful, calming, safe and happy and a place you would want to return to whenever you feel the need to relax.
2. Imagine it in as much detail as you can – use your senses to make it as real as possible – and see yourself comfortably enjoying this place.
3. Now close your eyes and take a slow, regular breath in through your nose. Become aware of your breathing. Focus on your relaxation place in all its detail and breathe out through your mouth.
4. Try to do this exercise for 10 to 20 minutes

After relaxation

Don't rush to get up after relaxation exercises. Sit with your eyes closed for a few minutes to avoid the possibility of feeling dizzy. Open your eyes and make sure you feel all right before standing up.