

# Anxiety

## What doesn't work for reducing anxiety? Alice Boyes Ph.D

Many of the strategies people use to try to escape anxious feelings can lead to a snowball effect and actually increase anxiety. Here are three examples.

### 1. Avoidance coping.

Avoidance coping involves things like failing to file your taxes, avoiding sorting out a mistake you've made, or avoiding a conversation because you feel awkward about it.

Avoidance coping can increase anxiety to the point it feels like your anxiety is eating you alive.

If you turn to ice-cream when you don't want to do something, that's avoidance coping.

Exceptions: when can avoidance be helpful?

Sometimes it makes sense to avoid situations or roles that you know aren't the best fit for your nature. For example, if you know that feel calmer and more secure working in a smaller team, you would generally try to stick to this.

### 2. Trying to avoid all mistakes and failures.

I'm anxious by nature. One of the biggest life lessons for me personally has been that whenever I try to completely eliminate mistakes and failures from my life, my anxiety goes through the roof and I essentially restrict my success because I hesitate so much before trying anything.

I've learned from experience that I can cope with failures, imperfections, flops, and situations I don't handle as well as I could have.

A big part of [successfully managing anxiety](#) is learning you can cope with things going wrong, rather than obsessing about trying to completely avoid negative things happening.

### 3. Trying to avoid showing physical signs of anxiety.

The people who tend to be the most tied up on knots with anxiety are often those who think a lot about how to hide any physical signs of anxiety e.g., their voice shaking. When you're focused on hiding signs of anxiety, you're focusing on yourself and not on the contextual cues that are being provided in the situation you're in. For example, you may not be listening as well as you could be to what the other person is saying when you're having a conversation.