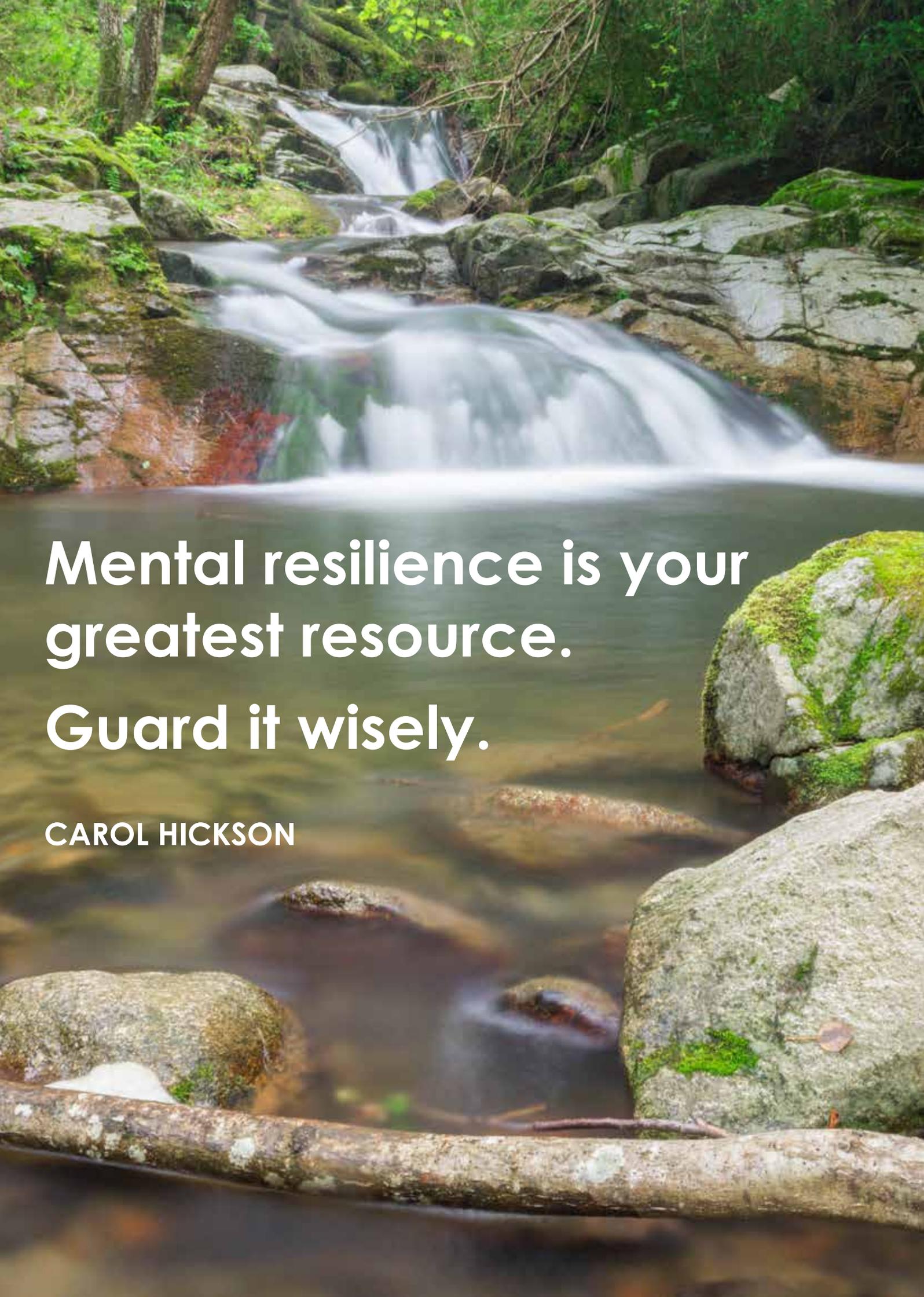


# TOP TEN TIPS FOR DEALING WITH ANXIETY



A photograph of a waterfall cascading over mossy rocks in a lush forest. The water is blurred, creating a sense of motion. The surrounding environment is filled with green foliage and large, moss-covered boulders. The overall scene is serene and natural.

**Mental resilience is your  
greatest resource.  
Guard it wisely.**

**CAROL HICKSON**

The first thing is to realise that most of us will suffer from anxiety at some time. Unlike stress which comes and goes depending on what's happening in our lives e.g. relationship issues, illness or a house move. Anxiety can be a 'feeling' or a 'mood', sometimes with no obvious cause. It is often this lack of a known trigger which upsets us, and clients will say 'I don't know why I'm like this' or 'I just don't feel like myself.'

Anxiety can be the 'butterfly' feeling in your stomach, the 'lump' in your throat, the 'thumping' in your chest. We are often aware of it as a physical sensation in our bodies. Here are my ten steps to dealing with anxiety:

### **Step 1:**

Accept it. This is how you feel. There is no judgment, just fact, that this is how you feel.

### **Step 2:**

Reassure yourself that you are not alone. There are people who care. Right now, there are people feeling exactly the same.

### **Step 3:**

Learn how to deal with the here and now. Learning how to breathe is a good place to start. You may think 'I know how to breathe', but many of us breathe very shallowly and don't take in enough oxygen and this can make us lightheaded and tired. If you practice this every day you will be more able to breathe in this way at the point of rising anxiety.

### **Breathing Exercise:**

- Let your breath flow as deep down into your belly as is comfortable, without forcing it. Imagine you are inflating a balloon in your abdomen.
- Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Try to be aware of the breath as it flutters around your nostrils and as it leaves your mouth.
- Breathe in gently and regularly. Some people find it helpful to count

steadily from one to four as they breathe in. You may not be able to reach four at first. Don't worry, practice makes perfect.

- Pause and hold your breath for a count of one or two.
- Then let the breath gently flow out of your mouth, this time counting from one to seven. Again, you may not be able to elongate the breath this much at first.
- Keep doing this for two to three minutes.

### **Step 4:**

Try grounding yourself in the present so that you focus on an object or task you are doing. Take in all of the detail, the colour, shape, smell, size, location – the aim is to distract yourself from the 'anxious' feeling, because the more attention that you give it, the more you will notice it and the bigger it will become. Try the exercise below. Practice it every day, even when you are not anxious, so it becomes your go to when you need it. Write 5,4,3,2,1 on post-it notes, stick them on your mirror or computer, to remind you to practice.

### **Grounding Exercise, 5,4,3,2,1:**

Look around you. Find:

**5** things you can see, add detail to each one e.g. I can see a dog; it is small and brown, and its tail is wagging.

**4** things you can touch, add detail to each one e.g. I am touching my trousers: the fabric is coarse; these are my favourite trousers.

**3** things you can hear, add detail to each one e.g. I can hear my children laughing and it makes me feel good.

**2** things you can smell, add detail to each one e.g. I can smell flowers; they remind me that Spring has arrived.

**1** thing you can taste, add detail e.g. I can taste chocolate; it makes me feel good.

This is called grounding. It can help when you feel like you have lost control of your surroundings. Grounding keeps us in the moment. When we are anxious, we are worrying about the future and what may happen, or about the past and what has already happened. The only place that we can have some control is the present. Grounding helps us stay present.

#### **Step 5:**

Practice Mirror Neurons. A Mirror Neuron fires when an animal either acts or observes the same action executed by another. It creates a map in our brains. A useful exercise for you to do is to look at yourself in a mirror, gaze deeply into your eyes (remember how good it feels when somebody you like looks right into your eyes) and make positive affirmations about yourself, for

example:

I am healthy.

I am strong.

I can do this.

Repeat for at least two minutes, several times each day. Anything that you would like to change or accept can be installed in this manner; effectively reprogramming your beliefs.

To make it even more powerful add the Calm Anchor. Using your right hand squeeze the thumb and forefinger together, pulsating the two to anchor good feelings. The technique is simple as you look deeply into your eyes in the mirror repeat positive intentions and pulsate your fingers together. Use this anchor regularly when you have good feelings to embed.

With practice you can return to these good feelings in the future simply by squeezing your fingers together.

#### **Step 6:**

Practise laughing as an exercise. At first you have to force it. You then start to laugh naturally at the ridiculousness of what you are doing!

#### **Step 7:**

If you have access to something that makes you laugh e.g. a video, then put it on. You cannot be anxious when you are laughing. Do things that make you smile every day.

#### **Step 8:**

Try and get outside every day. Sit in the garden. Observe the signs of life and new growth. We are part of a greater universe and it is unfolding around us.

**Step 9:**

Remind yourself that this will pass. Perhaps now it doesn't feel like it, but it will.

**Step 10:**

Try EFT: Using two or three fingers tap on the karate chop point of your hand with a medium to firm pressure. As you tap say to yourself 'Even though I am feeling anxious about what's happening right now, I choose to feel calmer.' Tap for several minutes. You can 'tap' before you go to bed and when you wake saying something like 'Even though I may feel some anxiety, I choose to let it go and be calm today.'

People with anxiety respond well to further sessions of EFT (Tapping) and Hypnotherapy, but in the first instance the above steps may help. Why not give them a try?

I'd love to hear how you get on with the techniques. Let me know which are your favourites. If you would like any more information about the modalities that I am qualified in, or ways in which I can help you, please get in touch.

Keep safe

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