PRACTICAL RESOURCE

The Anxiety & Anticipation Loop

A simple worksheet for noticing what happens between a trigger, a prediction and the response that follows.

What this is for
Use this sheet to slow down an anxious episode and see the pattern around it. The aim is not to prove your anxiety wrong, but to notice what your mind predicts and what you do next.

1. Start with one recent example

Choose a specific moment rather than 'I am anxious all the time'. What was happening just before the anxiety increased?

Situation / trigger

2. What did your mind predict?

Write the feared outcome as plainly as possible. For example: 'I'll panic', 'I'll embarrass myself', 'I won't cope', 'the symptom will get worse'.

The prediction

3. What happened in your body?

Notice sensations without judging them: tension, heat, dizziness, racing heart, nausea, urgency, breath changes, numbness, shaking or anything else.

Body response

4. What did you do to feel safer?

Safety responses are understandable. Examples include avoiding, escaping, checking, reassurance-seeking, over-preparing, monitoring your body or trying to control every detail.

What I did

5. What happened immediately afterwards?

Short-term effect

Did the action reduce anxiety, give relief or make you feel more in control?

Longer-term effect

Did it strengthen the idea that the situation was dangerous or that you could not cope without the safety behaviour?

6. A different experiment

What is one small thing you could try next time that gives you a little more choice without demanding that you feel completely calm first?

Remember
Anxiety often becomes convincing because the whole loop happens quickly. Mapping it is a way of making the sequence visible. You do not need to change every part of the loop at once.