

What can I do to prevent it?

There are many ways to reduce your stress. Dealing with stress may also help resolve or decrease your level of anxiety. Here are some places to start¹:

- Discuss your stress with someone who will listen and give advice if you want it
- Think about what is causing stress in your life - what can be changed, reduced or stopped to take some pressure off
- If things are beyond your control, it's more important to reduce stress in other areas
- Problem-solving and action planning are two helpful approaches that can break things into do-able steps
- Get help with budgeting or financial advice
- Ensure you are eating healthy foods, getting enough sleep and exercise
- Getting a regular massage helps to lower your cortisol levels, thereby reducing your stress. It also helps your immune system
- Sitting all day is really unhealthy. We need to be more active for both our bodies sake and our mental wellbeing
- Learn about stress and/or anxiety. Knowledge is power. Here are some places to start:
 - <https://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/conditions-and-treatments/mental-health/stress>
 - <http://anxietysupport.org.nz/>
 - <https://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/conditions-and-treatments/mental-health/anxiety>
 - <http://www.headspace.org.nz/young-people/stress-and-anxiety.htm>
 - Relax - Say Goodbye to Anxiety and Panic Attacks (a book), Dr Patrick McCarthy

¹ <http://www.healthnavigator.org.nz/health-topics/anxiety/>

Massage in New Zealand

Did you know that anyone can practise massage, with no formal training or experience?

Massage New Zealand (MNZ) is the Association for Professional Massage Therapists and has been central in developing the high massage standards now used in New Zealand.

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Massage New Zealand Standards of Practise

MNZ encourages and supports the highest quality therapists. MNZ Registered Therapists:

- Have attained an approved qualification
- Display a current Practising Certificate
- Complete ongoing professional development
- Work under MNZ's Code of Ethics
- Have a current First Aid Certificate

Choose an MNZ Remedial Massage Therapist (RMT) for treatment (including postural issues) and sports massage.

Choose an MNZ Certified Massage Therapist (CMT) for relaxation and stress management massage.

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ANXIETY AND STRESS

CHOOSE A MASSAGE NEW ZEALAND THERAPIST TO RELAX AND EASE THE PRESSURE OF STRESS AND ANXIETY



What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a normal emotion that most of us experience sometimes due to a stressful event or misfortune. However for some people the worrying or anxious feelings increase or become more constant until they interfere with everyday life. This is recognized as an anxiety disorder.

Approximately 15% of the New Zealand population are affected by anxiety disorders. Anxiety can lead to poor social functioning and decreased resistance to illness.²

There are different types of anxiety disorders including³:

- Generalized anxiety disorder
- Anxiety disorder due to a medical condition or illness
- Panic attacks
- Panic disorder (with or without agoraphobia)
- Phobia disorders
 - specific phobias – spiders, heights, flying, confined spaces etc.
 - agoraphobia - fear of open spaces
 - Social phobia - also known as Social Anxiety Disorder
- Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)
- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Acute stress disorder

How can massage help?

A single session may help relieve feelings of stress and anxiety. Massage works by reducing painful feelings, enabling deep sleep (which also reduces pain), lowering cortisol levels (stress hormone) and heart rate. It can also boost your immune system and relax your tense muscles.²

Generally a series of treatments is recommended to allow a longer lasting effect. It is also beneficial to include a regular massage into your wellbeing routine. That may be weekly, fortnightly or monthly depending on your individual workload and stress levels.

² A Meta-Analysis of Massage Therapy Research. Moyer, Christopher A.; Rounds, James; Hannum, James W. Psychological Bulletin, Vol 130(1), Jan 2004, 3-18.

³ <http://www.healthnavigator.org.nz/health-topics/anxiety/#selfhelp>

What is stress?

The body's normal reaction to a stressful situation is the fight-or-flight response. During this, our body's sympathetic nervous system releases larger amounts of the chemicals cortisol, adrenaline and noradrenaline, which trigger an increased heart rate, enhanced muscle readiness, sweating, and alertness – these reactions help to protect us in a dangerous or challenging situation, allowing us to fight or take flight (run from danger). This response is a valid reaction to getting out of the way of a passing car, however if our body remains in this state for prolonged periods the body begins to suffer ill effects due to not getting time to rest and repair.

As Figure 1 shows, increased stress results in increased productivity – up to a point. After which things can go downhill fast. However, that peak of optimal performance differs for each of us. You need to be sensitive to the early warning signs that you are approaching stress overload and heading out of optimal stress levels and into fatigue. These signals also differ for each of us and can be so subtle that they are often ignored until it is too late.

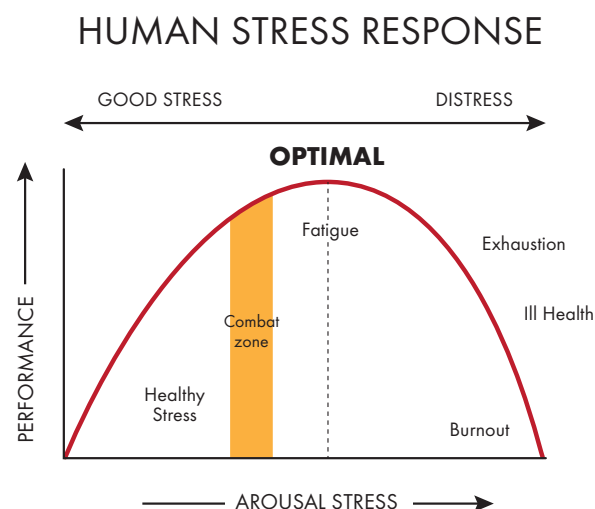


Figure 1. Adapted from: Nixon P, Practioner, 1979.

Research says...

Massage research separates anxiety into two types;

STATE ANXIETY: A momentary reaction to a situation/event – this may respond to a single massage treatment, although a series could also be beneficial.

TRAIT ANXIETY: Unlike state anxiety this is not a temporary feeling – this includes all the anxiety disorders. These conditions will generally require a series of massage treatments to be effective.⁴

Single massage treatments have been shown to reduce state anxiety, blood pressure, and heart rate. Multiple sessions reduced delayed assessment of pain. Reductions of trait anxiety and depression were massage therapy's largest effects (in an overview of all massage research), with a course of treatment providing benefits similar in magnitude to those of psychotherapy.⁵

Massage therapy has produced good results for alleviating pain, tension, and anxiety. In a study of the efficacy and feasibility of massage therapy delivered postoperatively for cardiovascular surgery, patients were randomised to receive a massage or to have quiet relaxation time (control)⁶. In total 113 patients partook. Patients receiving massage therapy had significantly decreased pain, anxiety, and tension. Patients were highly satisfied with the intervention.⁶

A 30-minute back massage was given daily for a 5-day period to 52 hospitalized depressed and adjustment disorder children and adolescents. Compared with a control group who viewed relaxing videotapes, the massaged subjects were less depressed and anxious and had lower saliva cortisol levels after the massage. Also the nurses rated the subjects as being less anxious and more cooperative on the last day of the study, and nighttime sleep increased over this period.⁷

⁴ Massage Therapy: integrating research and practice/ Trish Dryden, Christopher A Moyer, editors. 2012.

⁵ A Meta-Analysis of Massage Therapy Research. Moyer, Christopher A.; Rounds, James; Hannum, James W. Psychological Bulletin, Vol 130(1), Jan 2004, 3-18.

⁶ <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20347836>.

⁷ J. Am. Acad. Child Adolesc. Psychiatry, 1992, 31, 1:125-131.