

Fight the fear!

Figure out what's holding you back with our quiz and banish that stomach-churning worry habit for good



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Sunday night's here again and, by rights, you should be curled up on the sofa, watching Gossip Girl without a care in the world. But what you're actually doing is worrying about whether you're prepared for that meeting tomorrow, or if you can afford to splurge on that designer bag you eyed in the shops last week, and whether you'll manage to grab dinner with your friend or have to work late and cancel on her again.

We all know what it's like to waste hours irrationally worrying, but most of the time we don't even know why we're doing it. And, with latest research showing that 5 million adults in the UK feel that anxiety has a negative effect on their lives, it's time we did.

“27% of people feel anxious about their job”

With the help of psychologist Angelina Bennet, we've compiled a quiz to help you identify your fear and overcome it. Here's to your most confident year ever!

SECTION A

Choose one answer for each of the following:

1 A friend has asked you to organise her hen night. You...

- Wish she'd asked someone else. Your ideas might be too boring. (C)
- Worry you'll let her down and you'll fall out. (B)
- Instantly panic about all the things that could go wrong. (A)

2 There's a promotion up for grabs at work, but other members of your team are also going for it. You...

- Think it's best to stick with what you know. (A)
- Fear it will lead to conflict between you and your workmates. (B)
- Feel convinced your colleagues are better qualified for the job. (C)

3 Your best friend offers to set you up with her brother, whom you've always fancied. You...

- Stress out! Dating him would only mess up your relationship with your best mate. (B)
- Think you won't live up to his expectations so tell her no. (C)
- Fret that it won't work out. How well do you really know him? (A)

4 You have the opportunity to move abroad with work. You...

- Decline. You'll never learn the language - you got a D in French. (C)
- Dismiss it immediately. A change of job, home and country is too much upheaval. (A)
- Wish you could accept but decide it wouldn't be fair to disrupt your family. (B)

5 You've been asked to host a family get-together. You...

- Wish someone else would cook. They're all better in the kitchen than you. (C)
- Start worrying about how you're going to keep everyone happy with the menu. (B)
- Have visions of disaster. You're bound to set fire to the kitchen! (A)

SECTION B

Tick the three statements you most agree with:

- I always end up doing more than is asked of me. (C)
- I often feel like I'm stuck in a rut. (A)
- I seek reassurance from family and friends. (B)
- I procrastinate when faced with difficult tasks. (C)
- I hate conflict or disagreements. (B)
- I would describe myself as a perfectionist. (C)
- I avoid risks at all costs. (A)
- I take criticism personally. (B)
- I prefer to stick to things I know. (A)

THE RESULTS

Mostly As - Fear trigger: The unknown

Your favourite words are "What if?" and you're what psychologists call a 'catastrophizer': you worry about the worst-case scenario. While that makes you reliable, it also means you let opportunities pass you by. "Some things are beyond our control. You have to remember that the world won't end when something in your life goes wrong," says cognitive behavioural therapist Avy Joseph.

Fight the fear: For a quick way to keep a track of your worry, create a 'fear jar'. Each time you worry about something, write it down then crumple up the paper and put it into a jar. Realising how few of those fears come to pass will bring home how much time you've been wasting on worrying.

If you're always looking into your crystal ball like some doom-laden fortune-teller, terrified of what's to come, 'mindfulness' might be for you. It's a way of training your brain to let negative thoughts go rather than dragging you down. Sign up for the Mental Health Foundation's flexible four-week online course (£40, Bemindful.co.uk), which involves daily meditation and yoga. Participants say that afterwards they feel less stressed and sleep better, plus the Government's given mindfulness the thumbs up as therapy for anxiety and depression.

Mostly Bs - Fear trigger: Rejection

You're everybody's best friend and you'd like to keep it that way. So, on a Friday afternoon, you'll be found finishing the filing, while everyone else is knocking back cocktails in the bar. You worry that if you don't give everyone what they want, then they won't like you any more. Unfortunately, that means you can be a doormat and, more often than not, don't get what you want out of life.

Fight the fear: Time for a reality check. Just because you cancelled a girls' night out while you had flu doesn't mean your mates won't invite you next time.

The Counselling Directory's clinical advisor Jules McClean says: "People who fear rejection think they're not lovable and then project that feeling on to others."

To help you accept that you are a loved person, ask your friends for a 'reference', noting why you're important to them. When you're fretting that you're going to be left friendless, read your references and remember why people think you're fab.

Food can fight fear, too: sunflower seeds and Brazil nuts contain important 'good mood' substances, such as selenium and tryptophan, which are natural mood stabilisers.

Mostly Cs - Fear trigger: Failure

You're Little Miss Perfect, right? Just like those X Factor finalists, you give 110 per cent, but it takes a forklift truck to get you out of your comfort zone. You're scared to try anything new in case you fail, so you convince yourself that you didn't want to do it anyway, thank you very much!

Fight the fear: Give yourself a break. If Dannii Minogue had given up when her second album flopped at Number 52, she'd never have become our fave X Factor judge 17 years later, would she?

Psychologist Angelina Bennet says channelling Dannii's positive mental attitude is key. "Next time you start telling yourself you're going to get sacked from your job or dumped by your man, grab a notepad and instead write down your ideal scenario (eg a promotion/a proposal) and

the steps you need to get there. So if you're worried you won't lose the stone you've pledged to shed by summer, picture yourself with a Jennifer Aniston-type bod. Next, list everything you could do to make that a reality (sign up to the gym, cut your takeaway habit). Then, instead of fretting about failure, you've got an action plan to help you reach your goal."

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Channel Dannii and Jennifer to fight the fear

