# The anxiety scales

Why anxiety is high when danger looks big and coping looks small.

How anxious you feel depends on two judgements your mind makes very quickly: how bad and how likely is the danger, and how well could I cope?

**Anxiety goes up when I...**

- overestimate how likely the bad thing is
- overestimate how awful it would be
- underestimate my own ability to cope
- forget about the help and support I have

**Anxiety comes down when I...**

- weigh up the real odds
- picture getting through it, not just the worst moment
- remember what I have coped with before
- count the people and resources I can call on

When we are anxious we tend to overestimate the danger and underestimate our ability to cope. The aim is to weigh both sides accurately, without pretending there is no danger.

## Questions for the danger side

- How many times have I predicted this, and how many times has it happened?
- If I had to bet money on it, what odds would I give?
- If it did happen, how bad would it be in a week, or in a year?

## Questions for the coping side

- What have I got through before that I did not think I could?
- What would I actually do, step by step, if it happened?
- Who could I turn to?

## A worry of mine, re-weighed

**The worry**

**The danger side**

What are the honest odds? How bad would it really be, a week on?

**The coping side**

What would I do? Who and what could I call on?

**Looking at both sides, how anxious do I feel now?**

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