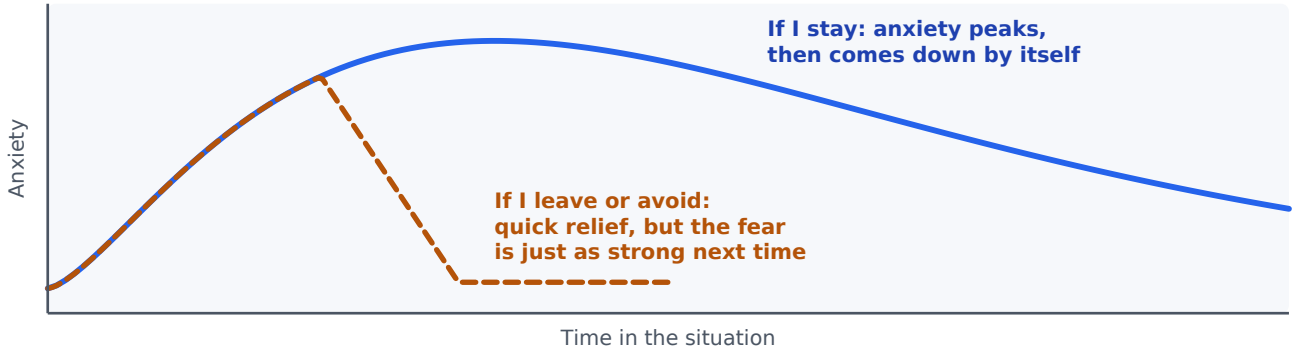
Avoidance: why it keeps anxiety going

How avoiding something brings relief now and more anxiety later.

Getting away from something frightening is a natural thing to do, and the relief is immediate. That is why avoidance is easy to fall into. Over time it makes anxiety worse.



What avoidance teaches your brain

- "That was dangerous, and I only just got away." The alarm is confirmed.
- "I cannot cope with that." Confidence shrinks a little each time.
- "Avoiding works." So next time the urge to avoid is stronger, and it spreads to more situations.

What staying teaches your brain

- Anxiety rises, peaks and comes down by itself, even if you do nothing to make it stop.
- The thing you feared usually does not happen, or you cope with it better than you expected.
- Each time you stay, the next time is a little easier.

Avoidance is not always obvious

- [ ] Putting things off, or making excuses
- [ ] Only doing something with a "safe" person
- [ ] Keeping busy so there is no time to think
- [ ] Drinking or scrolling to take the edge off
- [ ] Leaving early, or arriving late
- [ ] Going, but not really taking part

Where to start

Start with something that feels manageable but not easy, and stay with it long enough for the anxiety to begin to drop. The biggest fears can wait until later.

My notes and questions

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