



# USING TENSION CONTROL TRAINING (TCT)

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SHEET 1

**Tension Control Training (TCT) is a self-help relaxation method designed to enable people to learn control over anxiety.**

Anxiety is a condition that is very common, yet few people allow themselves the time to begin to overcome it. The approach will only work if the person wishes to learn the skill of controlling anxiety and is prepared to work at it steadily and regularly over several weeks. There are no shortcuts to learning this new skill. It is therefore very important that you make up your mind

whether you want to apply yourself to learn to control your anxiety in this way. Ultimately it is only through practice that improvement will occur. Using this handout and the two linked audio relaxation files, you will be taught a method of achieving a state of calm relaxation simply by concentrating your mind on relaxing thoughts rather than unhelpful, fearful thoughts.

The key to the approach is to help you to relax the tension in your body and move your thoughts away from the worries that can dominate your thinking. It involves noticing and being mindful about your body and breathing and also helps you let thoughts just be so you can move your mind to a calm controlled relaxed state. It normally takes a few sessions to begin to learn the skills of experiencing this deep calm. To do this you will need to practice this regularly – preferably twice a day. Try to view the session as a “prescription” to be taken in the morning and evening. Each session should not be too long - just 10 minutes - but you will need to find a room where you can be on your own and not be interrupted by others. If this is difficult it is important to ask yourself whether you are just too busy to relax and if so what changes you need to make in your life to change this.

You may find as you begin to practice the Tension Control Training that your thoughts begin to wander as you listen to the session. It is quite normal to find it is hard to do this at first, but with practice and further sessions we hope you find it easier and easier to reach a state of calmness. Over six to eight weeks many people find that they are slowly able to stop using the sound files as they find that they can move to a state of calm in everyday life. As with a good holiday, the benefits of this last far longer than just the time taken during the session of relaxation and we hope you notice additional benefits throughout the day. There are two main parts to the treatment approach:

1. In the first two or three sessions you should listen only to the first version of Tension Control training. This will show you how to let calm feelings replace anxious feelings during the session. You will be asked to firstly relax your body, and then to form a mental image of a calm, relaxing scene. This can be anything you want – flowers, a favourite countryside place, or a relaxing past holiday.
2. After this you should move on to the second version of Tension Control Training where you begin to think about slightly stressful events and then learn to control the anxiety this causes.

With practice, you will slowly begin to control unnecessary anxiety in real life situations in order to reach a state of calm. The aim is to help you cope with situations that previously you dreaded.

TCT should occur at a pace that you feel confident in. Sometimes some people find they become more anxious as they think about trying to relax. If this occurs, consider whether you are trying to envisage situations that initially cause too much anxiety. In which case you should instead choose things that create less distress until your confidence improves. If you continue to feel more anxious or experience high anxiety please take advice from your own

doctor or other healthcare practitioner before using the approach again.

The really good thing about Tension Control Training is that *you* do it. Once you have acquired the skill of controlling anxiety and learned why you become anxious, this skill is then yours for life. Tension Control Training, therefore, is a simple and effective way of helping you change, but remember, it won't help unless you have really made up your mind that you are going to work at it. If you have any questions about this, please discuss this with your GP or other health care practitioner.

Resources: Free audio downloads, or an audio CD to buy are available from [www.lttf.com/shop](http://www.lttf.com/shop).

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