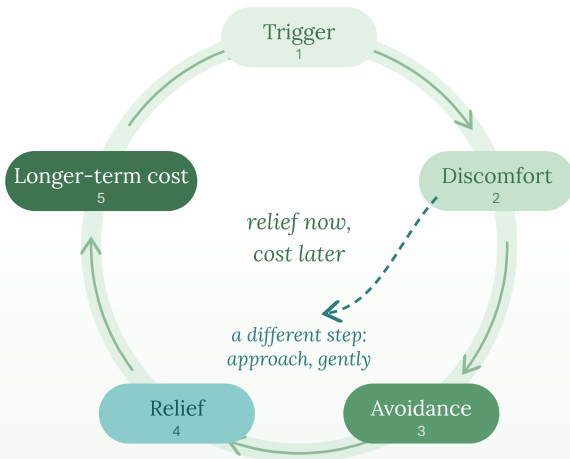


The Avoidance Cycle

PSYCHOEDUCATION · HOW AVOIDANCE CAN KEEP ANXIETY GOING

Why stepping away brings relief now, and what it can cost over time

Avoiding what feels uncomfortable is a natural, understandable response. In the short term it works: distress drops. Over time, though, research suggests that repeated avoidance can keep anxiety going, because it limits the chance to learn that a situation may be more manageable than it feels.



1 Trigger

A situation, thought, memory or sensation that feels threatening or uncomfortable.

2 Discomfort

Anxiety, dread, shame or tension rises. The urge to escape can feel strong.

3 Avoidance

Stepping away, putting it off, distracting, or using "safety behaviours" to get through.

4 Relief

Discomfort drops quickly. This relief makes avoiding more likely next time.

5 Longer-term cost

Fewer chances to learn it's manageable; fears can grow and life can shrink.

01 Mapping my cycle

a recent example

Trigger what set it off?	
Discomfort what I felt	
Avoidance what I did	
Relief how quickly it eased	
Cost what it may cost me	

02 Stepping out of the cycle

small, gradual and at your own pace

1 Notice Spot the trigger and the urge to avoid.	2 Name it "I'm feeling anxious, and I want to get away."	3 Choose a small step Something slightly uncomfortable, not overwhelming.	4 Stay with it Let the discomfort be there, without needing it to vanish.	5 Learn What happened? What did I learn about my ability to cope?
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Not all avoidance is a *problem*

Avoiding genuine danger is sensible, and some avoidance can be a helpful coping choice. A useful question is what the avoidance is doing for you: is it keeping you safe, or keeping your life smaller than you'd like?

To bring to my next session

SOURCES

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