

## RACHEL SPRUNT

counselling & wellbeing



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### **“Don’t worry” doesn’t help: what does help someone with anxiety?**

When someone we care about is anxious, it’s natural to want to soothe them. We often reach for quick reassurances like:

**“Try not to worry.”**

**“There’s nothing to be anxious about.”**

**“You’ll be fine.”**

These are well-meant but if you’ve ever been on the receiving end of anxiety, you’ll know **it doesn’t work that way.**

### **Anxiety isn’t just “worrying too much”**

Anxiety is a normal, human response to perceived danger, it’s hardwired into our bodies and brains to keep us safe. When the system works well, anxiety helps us prepare, avoid risk, or respond to a threat.

But sometimes that protective system becomes over-sensitive or misaligned. Instead of reacting to real danger, it fires up around imagined or potential ones. Instead of calming down after the event, it lingers.

This is when anxiety becomes overwhelming, and telling someone *not* to worry can feel like telling a fire alarm to *stop going off* without checking where the smoke is coming from.

### **So what helps instead?**

#### **Understanding the root**

Anxiety often has a reason for being there even if it’s not immediately clear. It might be connected to past experiences, unmet needs, or chronic stress.

Helping someone gently explore where their anxiety comes from, with

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curiosity rather than judgment, can be far more supportive than brushing it aside.

### **Validating the feeling**

You don't need to fix the anxiety, just acknowledging it can help:

"That sounds really hard. I can see why that would make you feel anxious." When we feel heard, we feel safer and that in itself can begin to ease the intensity.

### **Normalising it**

Anxiety is *not* a flaw or weakness. It's a natural part of being human. Letting someone know that anxiety is common and something they don't have to face alone can reduce shame and isolation.

### **Exploring balance**

Anxiety becomes problematic when it dominates our choices, thoughts, or bodies. Working with a counsellor can help untangle what's protective and what's holding someone back and build ways of responding that feel more balanced and empowering.

### **If you're supporting someone with anxiety...**

- Be patient. They may not be able to "snap out of it."
- Listen without rushing to solve.
- Offer calm, consistent presence.
- Encourage them to speak to a professional if it feels right, not because they're "broken," but because they deserve support.

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### **And if *you're* the one feeling anxious...**

You're not alone. You're not too much. And you're not doing anything wrong. Anxiety is your body's way of trying to keep you safe, it just needs a little help remembering that you *are*.

In counselling, there's space to understand what's going on beneath the surface. We don't push anxiety away, we listen to it, learn from it and work together to rebalance it.

**If that sounds like what you need, I'm here when you're ready.**

*Rachel .*