

Reducing Avoidance Behaviours

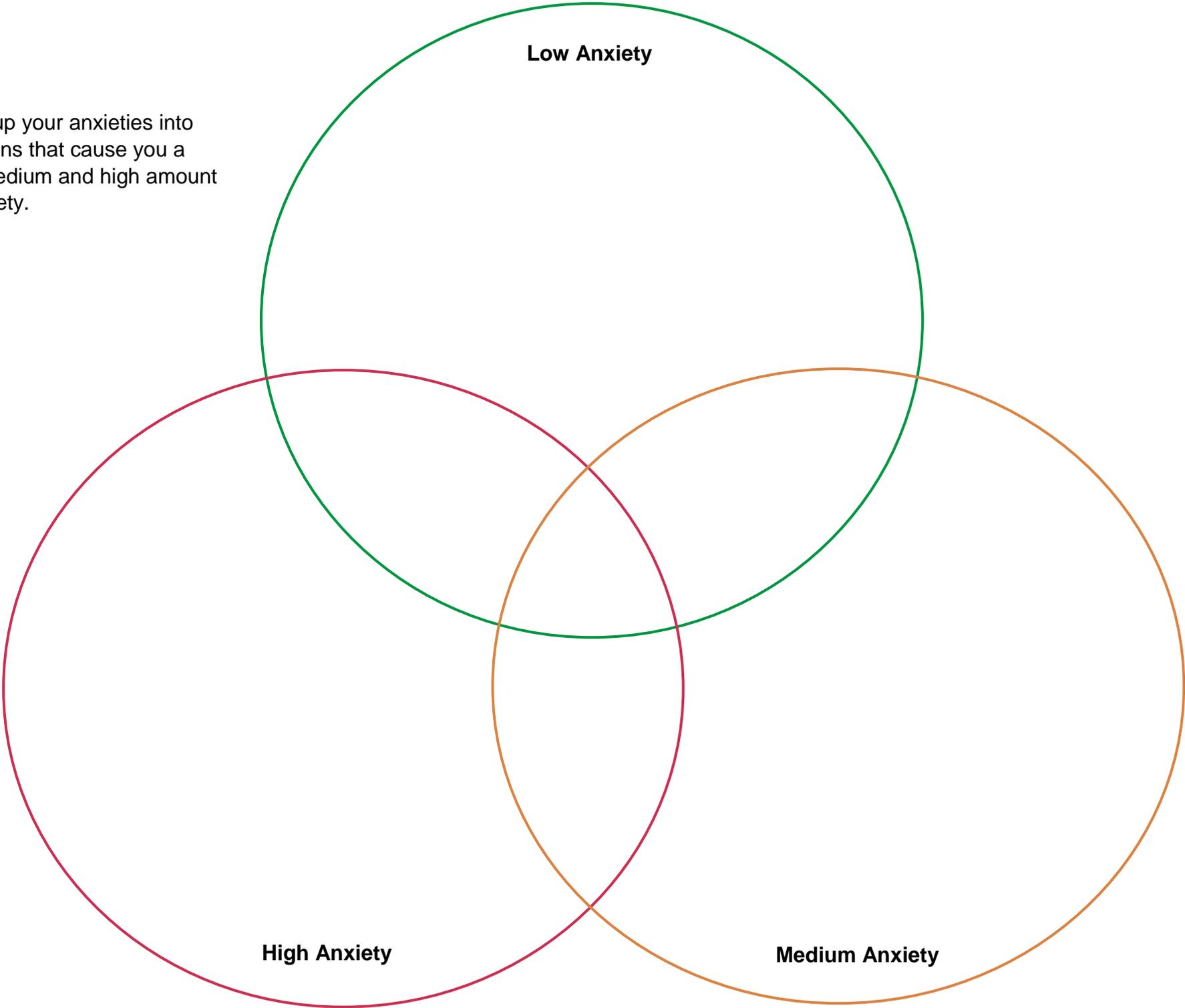
Avoiding situations that make us anxious is a natural response to anxiety but is not very helpful as this can increase and continue our anxiety. Instead of avoiding situations that make you anxious it can be best to confront them for a small amount of time and often in order to prove to yourself that you can cope and that the situation is not as bad as you may have believed.

To help you stop reduce avoidance behaviours follow the steps in this document.

1. Start by writing a list of the things that make you anxious.

Things that make me anxious:

2. Group your anxieties into situations that cause you a low, medium and high amount of anxiety.



3. Choose a situation that causes you a low amount of anxiety and confront this situation. Sometimes when we stay in a situation that makes us anxious our anxiety can start to reduce, so try to stay in the situation until you feel your anxiety lessen.

Remember that you can use Grounding and breathing techniques to help you reduce your anxiety. Visit www.rapecrisis.org.uk/get-help/looking-for-tools-to-help-you-cope/grounding/

When you feel more confident you can repeat the exercise, choosing a situation that you find more anxious. Gradually you should move from situations that cause you low anxiety to situations that give you high anxiety.

5. Try keeping a diary of the situations you confronted and how anxious they made you feel by answering the questions below. In a few months, you can look back and compare your anxiety levels in situations before you started confronting anxious situations, with after a few months of trying to reduce your avoidance behaviour.

How did you feel before you confronted the situation?

How did you feel during the situation?

Did it get easier to stay in the situation?

What helped you to cope?

How did you feel afterwards?

Was the situation as bad as you were expecting?

Remember that you can visit www.rapecrisis.org.uk to access confidential online support and find details of your local Rape Crisis Centre. Alternatively you can call the national Rape Crisis helpline (run by our member centre Rape Crisis South London) on **0808 802 9999** between 12 noon – 2:30 pm and 7 – 9:30 every day of the year for confidential support and/or information about your nearest service.