



# AXE *the* ANGST

Looking for a pill-free way to alleviate anxiety symptoms?  
Try these alternative therapies...

Words: Sarah Sellens

***The UK is in the grip of an anxiety epidemic.*** According to statistics, one in 10 people are likely to have debilitating anxiety at some stage of their life and that figure is set to rise. But this doesn't show the whole picture as, despite a growing awareness of mental health problems, 36 percent of common ailments go undetected. It turns out, many of us feel nervous about seeking treatment, and one important factor to consider is that no single treatment works for all. While some may reach for prescription medication, others may respond well to a natural approach, such as meditation or breath work. If you want to discover whether alternative treatments can help, there's a host of complementary therapies you can turn to. Here are just a few of them.

## ACUPRESSURE

### What is it?

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) has successfully addressed anxiety for centuries. Acupressure is a massage technique based on its principles, as it uses finger pressure to mobilise blocked chi (qi, or life force energy). "Acupressure points are located on the meridians of the body where chi can be accessed to release blocked or congested energy centres," explains Sanae Baba, acupressure expert at Cloud Twelve ([cloudtwelve.co.uk](http://cloudtwelve.co.uk)). "Pressing these points can help ease muscle tension and promote blood circulation."

### How does it work?

Chinese medicine teaches that anxiety can be due to a number of factors, such

as blood stagnation. Acupressure works by relieving stagnant energy to help ease causes of discomfort. "Anxiety can create many symptoms including dizziness, fast heartbeat, fatigue, muscle aches, nausea, sweating and trembling," explains Sanae. "Some of the anxiety-relieving pressure points include the chest centre, the third eye, the heavenly pillar, the shoulder well and the spirit gate." Visit [embodyforyou.com](http://embodyforyou.com) for more info.

### Try it today:

The spirit gate point is considered the best for relieving fear. This pressure point is located in the wrist crease, towards the side of the little finger and the inner arm. Press this point steadily to get respite from emotional instability.



## SOPHROLOGY

### What is it?

Achieve calm when you need to with this breathing technique, developed by Columbian neuropsychiatrist, Professor Alfonso Caycedo, in the 1960s. "Sophrology is a dynamic meditation that uses a combination of breath work, relaxation, gentle body movement, meditation and visualisation techniques to bring the mind and body into balance," explains Dominique Antiglio, sophrologist at BeSophro ([be-sophro.co.uk](http://be-sophro.co.uk)) and author of *The Life-Changing Power of Sophrology*.

### How does it work?

Anxiety activates the sympathetic nervous system (fight or flight response) but, when you practise sophrology, you put your body into parasympathetic mode (the rest and digest response). "Sophrology techniques naturally activate the alpha brain wave state," adds Dominique, "This has been scientifically proven to be a deeply healing state for the mind, which will really help anxious people to recharge."

### Try it today:

Stand in front of a chair with your eyes closed, breathing deeply. Inhale and tense your body as if feeling anxious at that moment. Exhale and imagine releasing the tension. Repeat two times, then sit and continue to breathe deeply. Finally, visualise an image that makes you feel safe – spend a few minutes focusing on it.

## THETA HEALING

### What is it?

Theta healing is an energy-balancing technique that uses meditation to change brainwaves to a slower frequency known as 'theta' (these occur in sleep and deep meditation). "The practice is based on the principal that we can heal or create anything if we believe it," says Dylan Ayaloo, theta coach ([dylanayaloo.com](http://dylanayaloo.com)). "It's an alternative therapy that wouldn't be advisable for somebody who is really struggling, but can be used as a daily coping mechanism."

### How does it work?

Using theta meditation techniques, the practitioner identifies limiting beliefs that

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*1 in 10 of us are likely to have anxiety at some stage in our life*

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are held in the subconscious mind. This is often done through body scanning and a form of applied kinesiology. "Most people will leave a session feeling more relaxed, energised, focused and awake, with greater clarity of mind," adds Dylan. For more information, visit [thetahealing.com](http://thetahealing.com).

### Try it now:

Lie down and close your eyes. Place your hands on your ribs and take a deep breath, feeling your ribs expand. Breathe out fully, feeling your ribs contract under your hands. Do 10 of these breaths. When finished, open your eyes and note how different you feel.

## BHĀVANĀ MEDITATION

### What is it?

Bhavana derives from the word Bhava, meaning 'becoming'. It is a technique used in Buddhism that can help build mental resilience through its five pillars: clarity in purpose, attention, mindful embodiment, compassion and wisdom. "Training in the Bhavanas gives you a foundation to cope effectively with personal, interpersonal, and environmental challenges," explains Leah Weiss, author of *The Little Book of Bhavana* (Quercus Books).

### How does it work?

The practice of Bhavana meditation aims to provide mental development by cleansing the mind of disturbances and inviting in more self-compassion. "Anxiety is a by-product, not the problem itself, and will remain until the root cause is addressed," adds Leah. "Bhavana cultivations are tools that allow you to face the problem head on. When you learn how to work with the Bhavanas, you gain a confidence that isn't based on needing everything to be going well for you – you learn resilience even when things go badly."

### Try it now:

Head to [leahweissphd.com](http://leahweissphd.com) for a selection of guided meditations and resources that can help you to learn the Bhavana tradition.

## Try it now: Ayurvedic Medicine

Ease your anxiety symptoms with Ayurveda in these easy steps...

### WHAT IS IT?

Ayurveda is an ancient Indian healing system that covers diet, natural remedies, lifestyle practices, rejuvenation and detoxification processes, hands-on therapies, plus yoga and meditation. "The key to unlocking Ayurveda's self-help is to find out what your 'dosha' or body-mind type is," adds Jo Webber, ayurvedic practitioner. "You'll then be able to know what helps you thrive – what foods to eat, how much sleep you need and even what exercises are best."

### HOW DOES IT WORK?

Ayurveda views anxiety as a disturbance of the nervous system, regulated by the vata dosha.

"This dosha has natural qualities such as being cold, light and subtle, and is easily disturbed by too much sensory stimulation, food or pressure," explains Jo. "You can balance it by keeping warm, rested and safe." Types of ayurvedic massage and herbs can also help.

### TRY IT NOW:

When anxiety looms, massage the 'stress marma'. Marmas are pressure points on the body that can be massaged for emotional relief. Using your index fingers, massage each temple six times in a clockwise direction, then six times anti-clockwise. To calm the nervous system, also try Pukka's Wholistic Ashwagandha (£16.95, Boots) or Night Time Latte (£4.99, Tesco).