



UNPLEASANTNESS OF ANXIETY

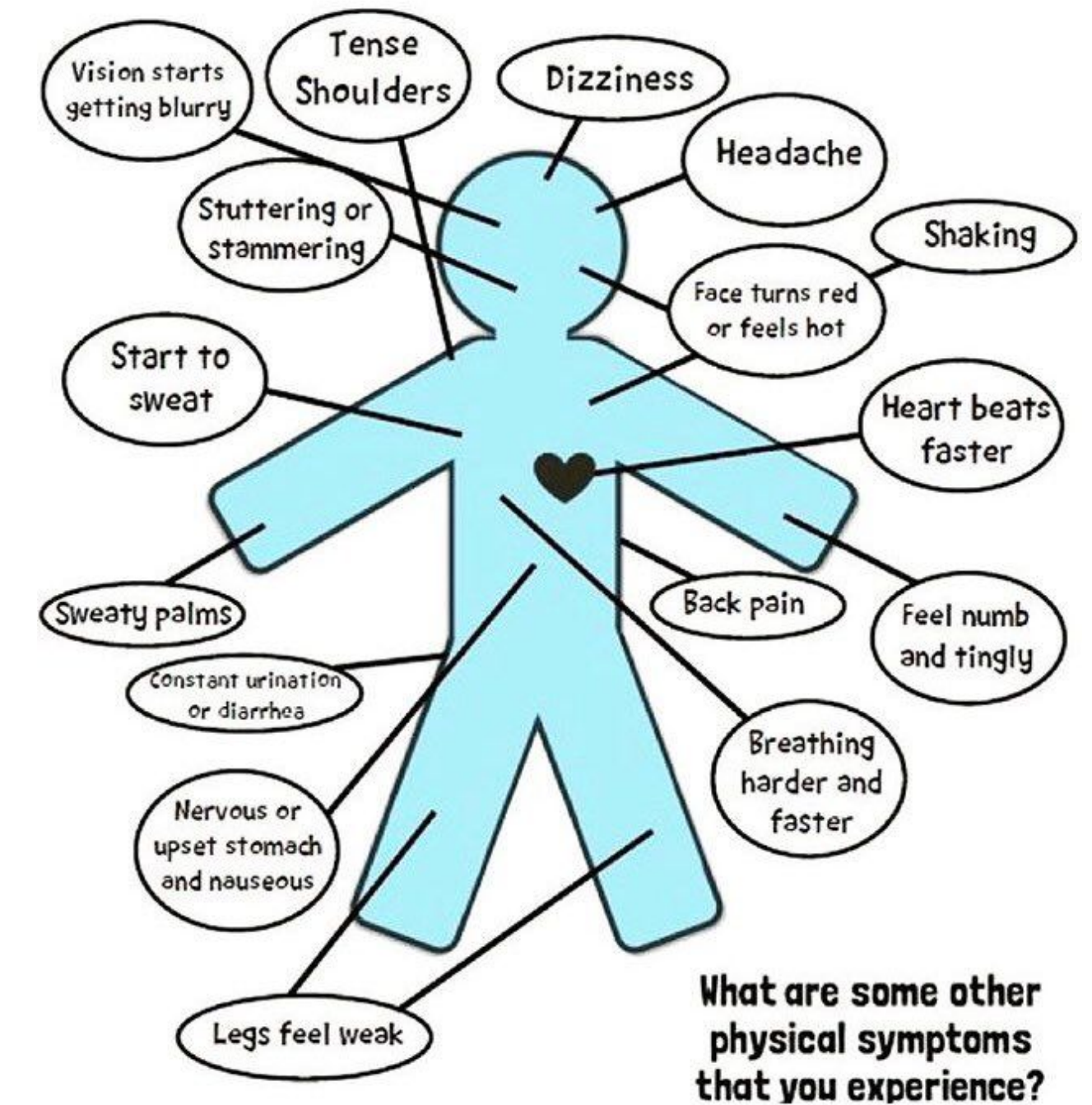
Anxiety is an uncomfortable, unpleasant feeling usually in the upper torso related to a sense of impending fear or doom. Sometimes it is very clear why we are experiencing anxiety or anxiousness. Other times we cannot pinpoint the reason why we are feeling this way.

As well as a cognitive and behavioral component there can be many physical sensations in the body that accompany anxiety.

Stress & Anxiety is produced by the amygdala which overacts to a perceived threat. It is our job to let the amygdala know we are okay and that we are safe- that there is no life-threatening danger here. We can do this through sensory activation, welcome the sensations onto your body, awareness of breathing (feeling the breath in the belly), and using a mantra such as *“this too shall pass”* or *“I am safe, I am okay”*.

- increased awareness of heart beat
- sweating
- trembling or shaking
- feeling of choking, shortness of breath or smothering
- chest pain or discomfort
- nausea or abdominal distress
- feeling of unreality or feeling detached from oneself or from the surroundings
- feeling dizzy, unsteady, light-headed or faint
- fear of losing control or going crazy
- fear of dying
- numbness, tingling or pins and needles
- chills or hot flushes.

ANXIETY AND MY BODY



Try the following ABCD for overcoming anxiety next time it arises.

A- Acknowledge the Amygdala

Acknowledge the role of the amygdala. *“Thank you, amygdala, I see you. But I am safe, I am okay”.*

B- Breathe

Breathe and relax! Inhale for 5, hold for 5, and exhale with an open mouth for 8. Allow the belly to rise and fall. Follow the air moving into the abdomen, and stay connected to the sensations of the breath. Welcome the sensations onto your body.

C- Compassion

Take the time to offer yourself self-compassion. Be kind to yourself. It is okay to feel this way. It will pass. *“It is okay to not want this”.* *“Let me open to it”.* *“It is okay to not be okay.”* *“This too shall pass”.*

D- Detach

Be mindful of thoughts about the anxiety itself. Watch the second arrow. You are not your anxiety. Put words to your feelings. *“Name it to tame it”.* *“I notice Anger arising, I notice fear arising”.* Remember why anxiety feels the way it does.



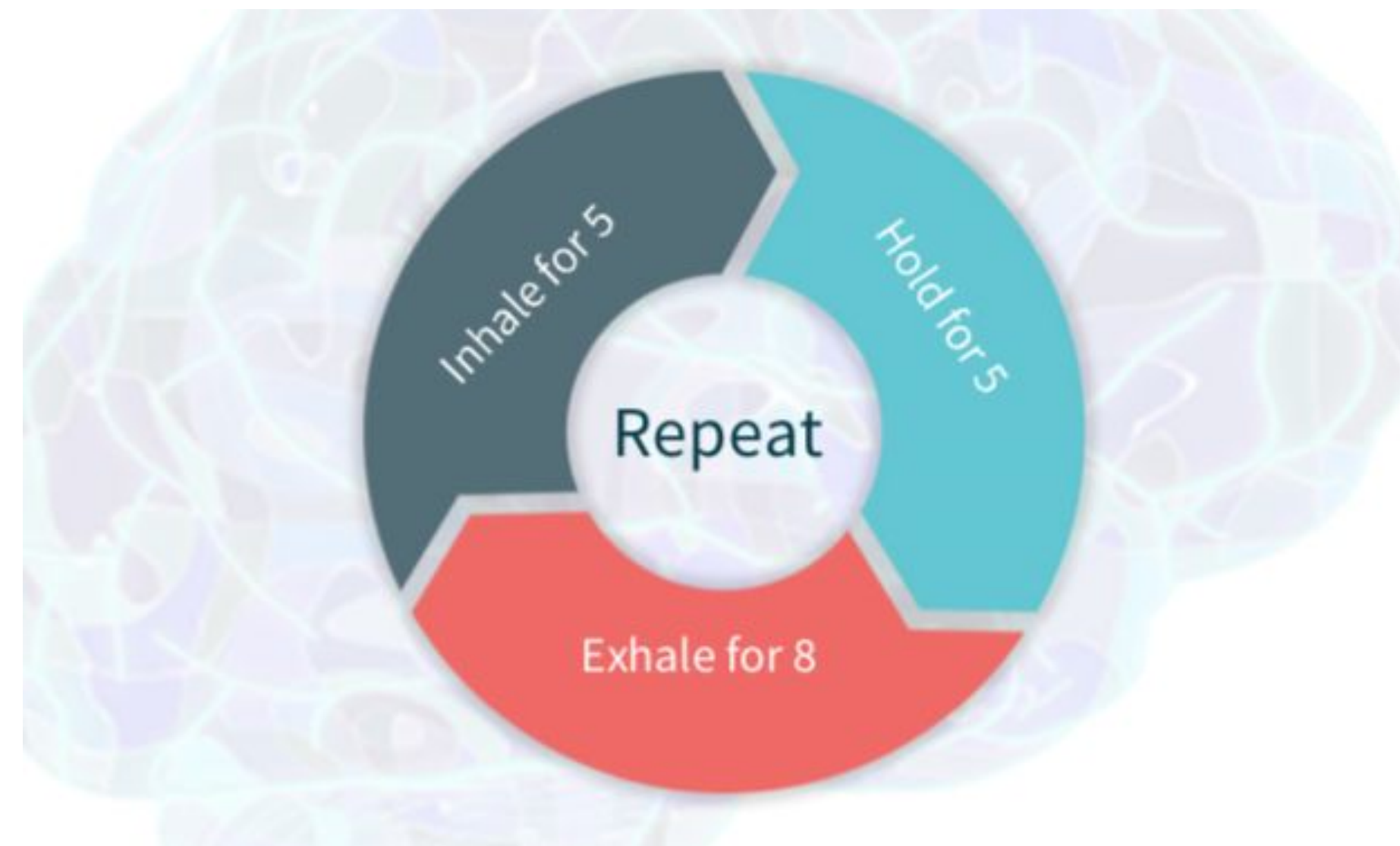
What is the Vagus Nerve?

Vagus nerve or Vagal nerves are the nerves in your parasympathetic nervous system. These nerves control the functions such as digestion, heart rate, immune system. These functions are involuntary and cannot be controlled, however deep and slow breathing can help stimulate the vagus nerves and relax those functions.

Deep and Slow Breathing to stimulate your Vagus Nerves

Try this next time stress, anxiety or panic is present. Ground yourself by sitting on the ground or a chair if possible. Inhale deeply for a count of five, hold at the top for a count of five and then exhale deeply for a count of eight with an open mouth. Imagine you are fogging up a mirror. This will stimulate the vagus nerve to elicit the relaxation response.

The purpose of grounding techniques is to allow a person to step away from negative thoughts or flashbacks. Techniques such as these can decrease the intensity of a person's feelings or trauma by distracting them using the five senses. Focusing on what they observe in the present environment can help a person detach from the past.



The 5 Senses Grounding Technique

Use this coping strategy the next time you feel anxious. Take a deep breath and tune in to your body and the environment around you. Focus on:

- 5 things you can see 
- 4 things you can feel 
- 3 things you can hear 
- 2 things you can smell 
- 1 thing you can taste 

Categories

Choose at least three of the categories below and name as many items as you can in each one. Spend a few minutes on each category to come up with as many items as possible.

Movies	Countries	Books	Cereals
Sports Teams	Colors	Cars	Fruits & Vegetables
Animals	Cities	TV Shows	Famous People

For a variation on this activity, try naming items in a category alphabetically. For example, for the fruits & vegetables category, say "apple, banana, carrot," and so on.