

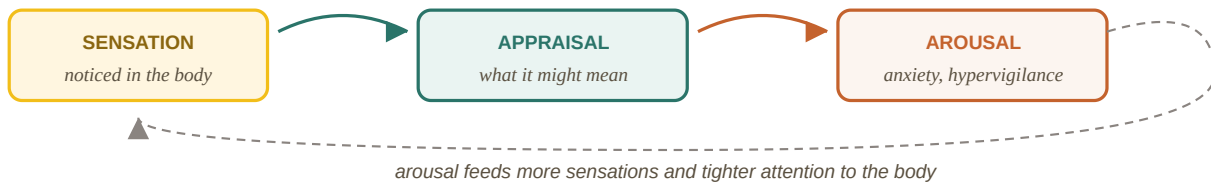
Symptom-mood diary

The relationship between body sensations and mood is bidirectional. Mapping the relationship is the work, not judging it.

Both the sensations and the anxiety are real. **What happens in the illness-anxiety loop is that each amplifies the other.** A diary makes the loop visible, which is the first step in loosening it.

i This is a mapping tool, not a judgement of your symptoms. The diary does not assert that symptoms are imagined or psychological. It records the relationship between sensation, thought, and mood, so that pattern becomes visible. The pattern is the data.

THE ILLNESS-ANXIETY LOOP



MAPPING THE PATTERN

What recording the loop tends to do

- The link between sensation, appraisal, and mood becomes **visible**
- The catastrophic appraisal is named as one of several possible interpretations
- Some sensations turn out to be reliable signals; others turn out to be noise
- The body's signals become workable, rather than overwhelming

FIGHTING THE SYMPTOMS

What unmapped distress tends to do

- Every sensation is interpreted in the context of the existing anxiety
- Reassurance-seeking, checking, and avoidance feel necessary
- The link between sensation and meaning stays **fused**
- The loop tightens, and the underlying condition becomes harder to read

SIX THINGS PAGE 2 RECORDS, TWICE A DAY WHERE POSSIBLE

Two entries a day is enough; one is fine. **The pattern over a week is what matters**, not the completeness of any single entry. Some entries will be brief; some will need more space.

1 TIME
When this happened

Date and time. Context matters: morning, after a meal, mid-night, on waking.

2 THE BODY
What was happening in the body

The sensation. Specific words help: tight, heavy, hot, racing, blurred.

3 THE THOUGHT
What you made it mean

The appraisal. What the sensation seemed to signal, even briefly.

4 THE MOOD
Mood and anxiety at the time

A 1 to 10 rating for each. Honest, not aspirational.

5 THE ACTION
What you did next

Checked, searched, rested, called a clinician, distracted, ignored. Anything counts.

6 THE AFTERMATH
What happened next

Whether the sensation settled, escalated, or stayed. The aftermath is the loop's data.

WHAT ONE ENTRY MIGHT LOOK LIKE

DATE / TIME	BODY SENSATION	APPRAISAL	MOOD	ANX.	WHAT I DID	WHAT HAPPENED NEXT
Tue 9pm	Tight chest, racing	Wrong with my heart	3	8	Checked my pulse	Eased once I sat down

REMEMBER

Both the sensations and the anxiety are real. **Mapping the loop does not require disbelieving the body.** It requires noticing the link between what is felt, what is thought, and what follows. That noticing is what makes the loop workable.

Two entries a day, for a week, is usually enough to see the shape.

Quadt, L., Critchley, H. D., & Garfinkel, S. N. (2022). Interoceptive pathways to understand and treat mental health conditions. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 26(6), 500–513. · Wolters, C., Gerlach, A. L., & Pohl, A. (2022). Interoceptive accuracy and bias in somatic symptom disorder, illness anxiety disorder, and functional syndromes: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *PLOS ONE*, 17(8), e0271717.

Symptom-mood diary

Record what was happening in the body, what you made it mean, how mood and anxiety landed, what you did next, and what followed. **One or two entries a day is enough.** The pattern over a week is the point, not the completeness of any single entry.

Mood and anxiety use a **1 to 10 scale** (1 = none, 10 = highest). Eight blank rows below. Use them across the week. Skip rows you do not need.

DATE / TIME	BODY SENSATION	APPRAISAL (WHAT IT MEANT)	MOOD 1-10	ANX. 1-10	WHAT I DID	WHAT HAPPENED NEXT

PATTERNS OVER THE WEEK

What does the diary show

Which sensations triggered which appraisals. Which appraisals tightened the loop, which loosened it. Which actions settled the sensation, which fed it. The pattern is the data.

A NOTE BEFORE THE NEXT ENTRY

If the sensations themselves warrant medical attention, this diary does not replace that. **Take the diary to the GP if it helps the conversation**, or use it to think through what to say. The diary records the loop; it does not diagnose the underlying condition.

WHEN YOU HAVE RECORDED WHAT YOU CAN

Bring it into a session, or share it with someone you trust.

Your diary is useful information whether or not you are currently in therapy. If you would like to talk it through, the Meet and Greet is a short call to see if we are the right fit.

MEET & GREET

Free

15 minutes

Online or in-person

No obligation