

Book review

SAM - Self Help for Anxiety Management app

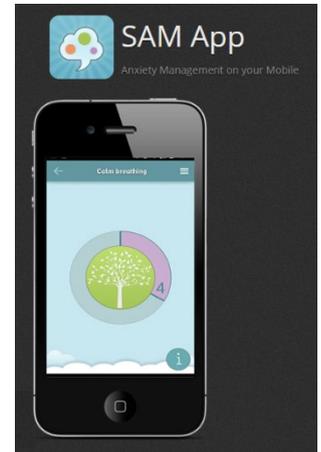
Category: App Reviews / Self-help

Publisher: University of the West of England, UK

http://sam-app.org.uk/

Audience: Supporting Myself

Summary: Comprehensive and useful anxiety self-management app



Smartphone apps are a convenient, readily accessible tool and for people experiencing anxiety who want quick guidance without the need for lengthy searching or taxing cognitive tasks. In the heat of the moment, the Self Help for Anxiety Management (SAM) app is ideal. Developed by a university team, the content is accurate and based on current psychological models.

SAM is the most comprehensive anxiety app I have come across so far. It offers tools for assistance with anxiety in the immediate moment, such as breathing, mindful observing of pictures, and redirecting your focus, all of which are valuable techniques. Additionally, the techniques are simple, clear, directive, and what is perhaps most appealing is that they are uniquely interactive. You can, for example, uncover pieces of a picture at a time by dragging your finger across the screen. Slightly longer-term tools are also offered, such as increasing awareness of unhelpful thinking styles, questioning your thoughts, and self-care among many more. Granted, a number of these tools are very brief in their description and some could use a little more expansion (or space to type!), but an app is by its nature not a comprehensive resource, nor do the developers claim it to be one.

Great visual cues

Another excellent feature of this app is a brief four-part visual analogue scale for rating your anxiety and tension, worrying thoughts, unpleasant physical sensations, and avoidance. The anxiety tracker provides a visual summary of your anxiety over time, enabling ongoing monitoring - an important component of change. There are numerous additional features that add to this app's appeal, including the ability to save favourite tools to your anxiety toolkit for ease of access later. Combined with the "things that make me anxious" section, this has some of the makings of a mini staying-well-plan. The SAM app also has a social cloud area where users can interact. As with any form of social media, this can have its benefits and pitfalls, but you can choose whether to enter this area or not.

Overall, the SAM app is the most practical anxiety apps I have seen, and with the added benefit of it being university-developed, it is one I certainly recommend.

Reviewed by Dr Mieke Sachsenweger, an Auckland clinical psychologist

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