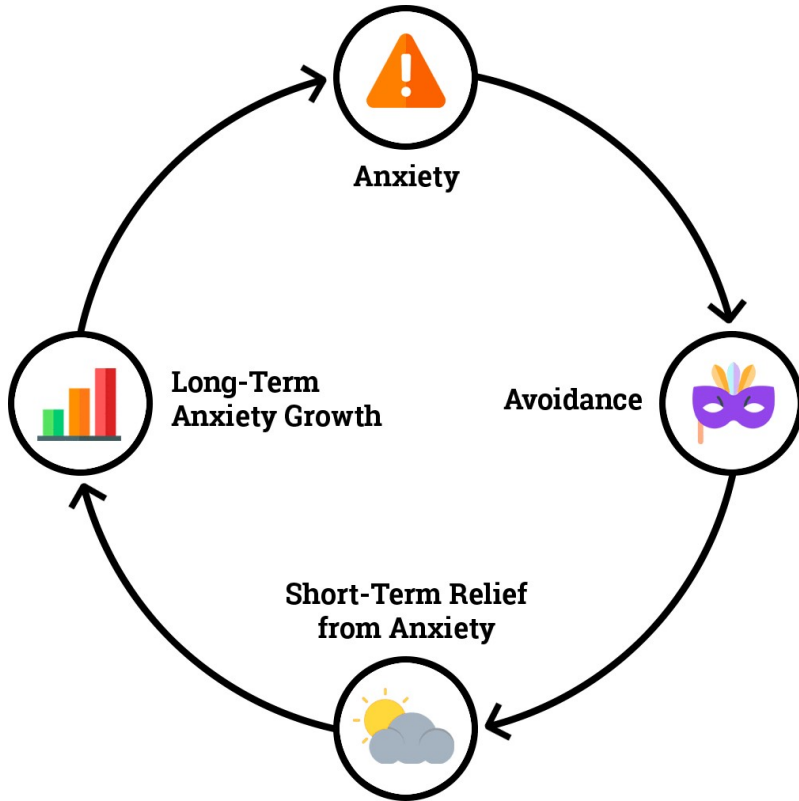


# The Cycle of Anxiety



## **Anxiety**

An anxiety-producing situation leads to uncomfortable symptoms such as worry, fear, a racing heart, sweating, or a feeling of being overwhelmed.

## **Avoidance**

Uncomfortable symptoms are controlled by avoiding the anxiety-producing situation. Examples of avoidance include:

- Skipping class to avoid giving a presentation
- Using drugs or alcohol to numb feelings
- Procrastinating on challenging tasks

## **Short-Term Relief from Anxiety**

Avoidance of the anxiety-producing situation gives an immediate sense of relief. The symptoms of anxiety lessen, but only temporarily.

## **Long-Term Anxiety Growth**

The fear that initially led to avoidance worsens, and the brain learns that when the anxiety-producing situation is avoided, the symptoms go away. As a result, the symptoms of anxiety will be worse the next time, and avoidance is more likely.