



## Anxiety Maintenance

*Westbrook, Kennerley & Kirk 2007*

**Safety Behaviours:** are behaviours or activities which we carry out to minimise or prevent something bad from happening.

These responses can prevent us from learning that we overestimate danger, because each "safe" experience is attributed to the success of a safety behaviour.

For example: a man with panic disorder who fears having a heart attack may move around slowly in order to remain safe; he may attribute his good health to slow movements rather than realise he has a healthy heart.

Helpful coping behaviours are different. For example:

A man relaxes his shoulders and slows his breathing in response to feeling tense, and then feels calmer.

If he interprets this as "I'm only feeling better because I did my relaxation routine, and if I hadn't done it, something awful would have happened", then it's a safety behaviour – he is unlikely to develop confidence that he could manage tension.

If he concluded "If I'm tense, I relax", then relaxing is simply a functional coping behaviour, and he is likely to grow confident that he can cope.