

New self-help app for anxiety launched with students in mind

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Researchers at UWE Bristol have developed an app for smartphones designed to help students and other users manage their anxiety.

SAM is believed to be one of the first apps of its kind developed by a university for use by students. It is a psycho-[educational tool](#) that runs on smartphones and tablets to help users understand and manage their anxiety. It incorporates a range of self-help activities that are available 24/7 on the users' device.

SAM provides self-help tools for monitoring the user's anxious reactions in different situations and a range of self-help options to help in learning to manage their anxiety. These include relaxation exercises, meditation,

calming images and interactive games. Users may also share anonymously in peer support through a closed social network of other users.

SAM is based on knowledge of how the mind generates anxiety and draws on established methods of psychological self-help for reducing anxiety. Best practice in human-computer interaction design and usability evaluation studies have ensured that the [app](#) is intuitive and easy to use. The project team worked with a local app development company who brought their experience of [mobile technology](#) to engage and maintain the interest of users.

The development of the app builds on research in [social anxiety](#) in learning by UWE Bristol and the University of Plymouth and the evaluation of a prototype app. Phil Topham, who carried out the original research and who has coordinated the app development project, says, "We know that there are many sources of anxiety for students, including the challenge of learning situations such as seminars and presentations. Anxiety and avoidance affects students' engagement with learning and their general well-being. We want students to get the best from their time in higher education, and this app provides an easily accessible tool for students to use, as and when they choose. With practice, SAM should give users increased confidence in managing their [anxiety](#), enhancing well-being and their ability to cope."

Provided by University of the West of England

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