



ANXIETY ATTACK

Experts agree that constant, low levels of anxiety are a scourge on our wellbeing, affecting more and more people every day. *Jessica O Sullivan* investigates how we can escape this modern malaise.

TRAIN OF THOUGHT

Close your eyes. Imagine you live near a set of busy railway tracks. All day long loud, heavy trains trundle by. At first the noise disturbs you, but eventually you are so accustomed to the sound that it becomes a background noise. That doesn't change the fact that the trains are still there, making noise – you've just learned to live with it because after all, it's not like you are in any immediate danger from the trains. Now imagine that those rumbling trains are actually the low rumblings of everyday anxiety caused by our modern lifestyle – daily habits that

cause faint stress responses whose cumulative effect are detrimental to our mental and physical health. Today, anxiety is one of those catch-all words that people use to explain away all manner of stress-related ailments. But what exactly is it? On a basic level anxiety is the mind's natural reaction to danger, also known as the 'Fight or Flight' response and it's a normal feeling that we all experience. And while anxiety disorders are a very real and prevalent mental health issue in Ireland (it's estimated that one in nine people will suffer from an anxiety disorder at some point in their lives and women are twice as likely as men to