



We all feel anxious at times. This is normal and healthy. We may experience feeling “anxious” as part of a good experience we are looking forward to. Or perhaps we are anxious out of fear of the future. All of this is an expected part of being human. But when feelings of anxiety become pervasive in our daily lives this can lead to problems with our mental, emotional and physical health. For a person with an actual anxiety disorder, the anxiety does not go away and can get worse over time. These symptoms can interfere with work, relationships with people and money and cause difficulty participating in daily life.

There are several types of anxiety disorders, including generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, and various phobia-related disorders. An anxiety disorder can be caused by a physical or psychological imbalance, a past trauma, changes in our hormones or sudden unexpected events in our lives. These disorders are best diagnosed and treated by a healthcare provider or therapist. But if you are not sure about your own situation this information can help educate you on some of the basic aspects of anxiety and how you can work with it.

Symptoms of Anxiety:

Fast heartbeat, sweating, or shortness of breath

Trouble concentrating or having mind go “blank”. Racing thoughts.

Muscle tension, aches or fatigue

Restlessness, irritability or feeling on edge

Constant worry or obsession over small or large concerns. Feeling a sense of impending doom

Stomach and intestinal problems including diarrhea

Shaking or feeling easily startled

Loss of sleep

How can I lessen my anxiety?

Psychotherapy and medication are the most common interventions used to treat anxiety. But these simple lifestyle changes can also help.

Get plenty of sleep. Preferably a good 8 hours a night. Create a calm environment in which to sleep and lessen your exposure to phones, computers, TV and other devices in your bedroom.

Eat healthy foods. Eliminate caffeine, sugar and alcohol as much as possible. Consider foods that help balance your blood sugar and mood naturally. Eat organic as much as possible, especially with your fruits and vegetables. Stick with water and avoid sugary drinks. Notice how your body responds to your food choices such as what gives you energy and helps you feel good over time. Talk to a health coach, integrative healthcare provider or nutritionist if you need help with your diet. There is also a lot of good material on line and in books about how to work with your diet.

Be mindful of your “worry habits”. Notice when you are worrying (when, how, how long) and let it be. Don’t try and fix it but rather let it go as much as possible. (see the handout on Mindfulness Meditation for more tips). The idea here is not to ignore, avoid or bury your worry. Just notice it and then bring your attention back onto what you are doing in the moment. This is a practice and one that can become easier over time.

Exercise everyday. Do some kind of activity, preferably something you enjoy. Walk, run, do yoga, pilates, strength training. 15-30 minutes a day is a good start.

Relax. Relax by practicing deep breathing, guided imagery, meditation or listening to music you enjoy. Spend time with people you care about. Try journaling or reading. Schedule time for a self care luxury such as a spa day, mani/pedi, or salon appointment. Consider how you want to take care of yourself and work in some activities that bring you joy and help you to relax.

How can I lessen my anxiety?

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Explore possible treatment plans with your health care provider. There may be behavioral therapies, nutritional supplementation, diet changes and medications available to lessen your anxiety.

Get yourself a good therapist. Finding a professional counselor who can help diagnose and treat your anxiety problem may be the best way to feel like yourself again. This is a good route to take if you find that your symptoms of anxiety are interfering with your daily life on a consistent basis.

Have your hormones checked. If you are pregnant, experiencing perimenopause or menopause you may notice changes in your mood due to an imbalance of your hormones. It is best to have this checked out by a qualified healthcare professional who can help you bring your hormones back into balance.

Consider having a routine physical. At times you may experience a change in mood related to a physical condition or disease you are experiencing. Best to have a good check up to rule out any physical issue that needs to be addressed.