



HOW TO FIGHT ANXIETY

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How to Fight Anxiety

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What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a feeling of unease, such as worry or fear, that can be mild or severe. This is often known as General Anxiety Disorder or GAD.



The characteristics of GAD include feeling nervous about a wide range of topics and events, which often becomes chronic. When anxiety is chronic, it becomes a long-term, stressful way of being to several issues for a significant amount of time. The causes of GAD are likely a combination of several stressful life factors and traumatic events such as, but not limited to puberty, separation, dieting and illness.

These life events are the triggers to emotions felt during a bout of anxiety. Feelings of less self-confidence, nervousness, stress, worry, isolation and fear (often due to bad memories) can occur.

Let's look at why life these events may trigger feelings of anxiety.

- Puberty: a time of hormonal changes, insecurities develop and exposure to bullying can all cause feelings of low self-esteem and can lead to socially awkward behavior because the individual now believes a distorted view of themselves, even though it is not true.
- Separation: many relationship changes occur in life, such as divorce or death. These events can bring up feelings of anger, sadness, grief and guilt. Then once this subject matter comes up again in the future, anxiety of dealing with those people or feelings once again arises.
- Diets: dieting is a major precipitant to the development of an eating disorder. This is because diet (rather than well-rounded eating) often causes feelings of deprivation and restriction both psychologically and socially. So, eating becomes a stressful topic and then loss of control like binge eating, weight gain and regret can occur, often in a cyclical manner, making it a dis-order.
- Illness: Having a health condition or serious illness can cause significant worry about issues such as your treatment and your future. Stress buildup from fear of getting sick again can occur; therefore, it is important to have a healthy eating pattern- one filled with lots of fruits and vegetables, fibre, protein and essential fatty acids.

A big life event such as any of these can trigger these nervous patterns. Unfortunately, this can then lead to a likelihood of a buildup of excessive anxiety during smaller stressful life situations, once again known as GAD.

What does an anxiety attack feel like?

Common physical symptoms of an anxiety or panic attack include:

- Trembling
- Rapid heartbeat/chest pain
- Dizziness
- Sweating
- Shortness of breath
- Blurred vision
- Feeling overwhelmed

These are all the body's response to anxiety and stress. The body's stress response system is known as the fight-or-flight response, which is the physiological reaction one may have when faced with a threat to life. Someone who suffers with anxiety issues is likely unable to react well to issues like bad news, financial difficulties or dramatic events, such as threats to life, and they become overwhelmed, leaving them incapable of dealing with the issue in a normal manner with healthy stress levels.

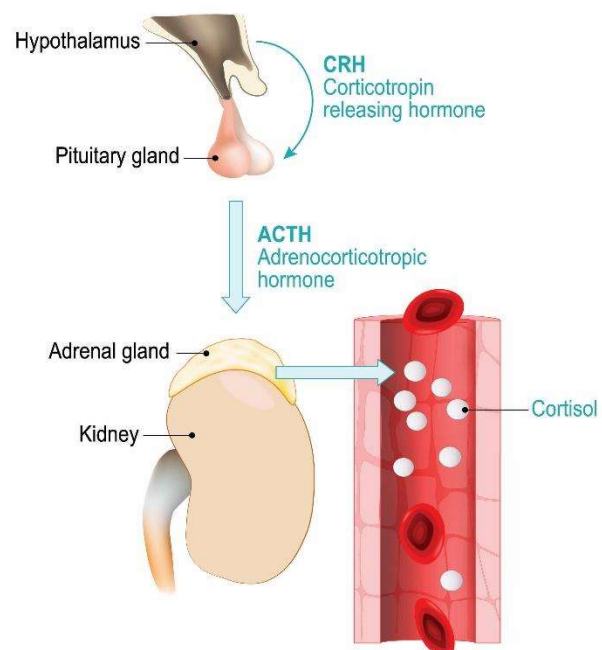
Healthy levels of stress are good for us because they give us the right amount of energy to focus on goals, to be active and to get places without becoming emotional. When emotions and thoughts of worry or fear come into play, this is where the body decides to respond with fight-or-flight. Here is the fight-or-flight cycle explained in detail.

Fight-or-flight

The fight-or-flight response comes from the sympathetic nervous system, which provides the body with energy so that it can react to stress.

During this reaction, if the response is negative, certain stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline get released into the bloodstream and the body perceives it as a harmful event. This will hinder and change other various functions like blood

STRESS RESPONSE SYSTEM



pressure, heart rate, digestion, breathing and tension in the body.

Various stress effects on the body include:

- Muscle tension and holding.
- Tension headaches and migraines.
- Restricts the diaphragm, making it more difficult to breathe.
- Blood vessels dilate, which can lead to hypertension and increased risk of heart attack or stroke.
- The liver produces more glucose, which is dangerous for those susceptible to Type 2 diabetes.
- Gastrointestinal problems occur like heartburn and indigestion; if the stress is severe then anxiety can lead to vomiting and diarrhea as well.
- Decreased libido, in both men and women.
- Increased food cravings, leading to weight gain.
- Decreased quality of sleep/sleep deprivation.

These effects on the body are numerous and serious, but not all hope is lost. Learning to manage stress will help control blood sugar levels, help you to sleep well, regain energy and focus. Let's explore all the natural ways for dealing with anxiety.

How to fight anxiety

Did you know you can calm down anxiety at home without the use of medication?

Here are some helpful, natural and actionable tips you can try the next time you need to calm down:



1. Exercise: get moving or take a walk outdoors, this will help increase your endorphins-making you feel good.
2. Avoid alcohol and cigarettes: the toxins in these substances can make anxiety worse and lead to other health problems.
3. Eat healthy: eat fresh food and avoid fast-food and junk food as they can lead to less energy and amplify shortness of breath.
4. Get quality sleep: set yourself a new sleeping schedule which enables you to get 7-9 hours of sleep per night.
5. Drink plenty of water: even mild dehydration can affect your mood.
6. Meditation and breathing: when feeling overwhelmed, take a moment to focus on your breath. Breath work calms down any thoughts that may be racing through the mind, which can then relax the body.
7. Listen to music: it can also help you change your focus from your thoughts to external noise, which is a nice break from always being in the mind.
8. Talk to someone: tell someone how you're feeling, there's no need to feel shy.

Talking to someone always helps to get things off your chest. It can be a friend, family member or a professional in mental health or a bodyworker. Bodyworkers often include massage therapists, osteopaths, acupuncturists and reiki masters. These types of practitioners often believe in the body and mind connection, therefore, once an anamnesis (health information about the individual) is conducted, they can further discuss with the person what is off balance mentally and physically. Then they can help ease feelings of anxiety through their natural holistic medicine.

Can massages help with anxiety?

Massage therapy has been used for a very long time to ease muscle aches and pains but also to ease tension in the mind. Massage therapy can help with mental and emotional problems including stress, anxiety and depression because it elicits feelings of calm and deep relaxation. Only when the body is fully relaxed can we calm the mind.

Types of massage recommended for deep relaxation are Swedish massage, Californian massage and Lomi-Lomi massage which are practiced with the use of oils and apply light to deep pressure on the body. This stimulates blood flow, collagen/elastin and endorphins. They promote great relaxation and relieve stress.

Diet and Water

Finally, another natural and healthy way to fight anxiety is through our food! Nutritional deficiencies are often seen in people with mental disorders due to poor appetite, skipping meals and giving into cravings which usually lead to unhealthy food choices.

Few people are aware of the connection between nutrition and mental disorders, like anxiety or depression; because these mental dis-orders are typically more emotionally rooted, poor nutrition can play a key role in the onset as well as the severity and duration of the symptoms.

Making sure to eat plenty of fresh foods that are rich in B vitamins, minerals, amino acids and omega-3 fatty acids helps with mood, energy and focus. Drinking lots of water and teas like valerian root, chamomile, and green tea can also have the same benefits because the body is hydrated, and the teas offer further nutritional support for the immune system.

Avoid foods that trigger anxiety, such as:

- Caffeine: a known stimulant for triggering the body's fight-or-flight response.
- Fast-food or artificial/processed foods: these foods tend to have food additives that can cause unpleasant physical reactions.
- Gluten: instead of wheat and sugar, eating complex carbohydrates instead like oatmeal, quinoa and rice are known to increase the amount of serotonin in your brain, which has a happy and calming effect on the mind.
- Alcohol: affects our ability to cope and manage stress, leads to reduced inhibitions making the emotions worse.
- Soda: is high in refined sugar, one can of soda is like eating a piece of cake. Your choice of beverage should always be water.



Having control on the foods we eat can make us feel like we have control on life. Proper nourishment for our bodies means positive effects on the mind. The food we eat sends signals to the brain, either positive or negative. Eating healthy food sends positive signals to the brain, therefore it is recommended to eat high quantities of fruits and vegetables, a variety of legumes such as beans and lentils, lots of lean protein like fish and eggs, and lots of “good fats” like nuts and avocados. Eating this way has many health benefits including reducing the risk of anxiety.

Whenever we take control of our habits, we take control of our lifestyle. Applying any of the health recommendations we just discussed does take time and effort, it can feel like hard work at first, but the benefits that come with it if you stick to it will most definitely help you take control of your anxiety because you will have control of your thoughts, your food and ultimately your mood.

I really hope this information helps you or anyone you know may need it. Please visit any of these recognized resources for further assistance:

- psychologytoday.com
- doxy.me
- verywellmind.com