

Anxiety: Signs, Symptoms & Ways to Cope

Anxiety-related Disorders are a very common mental health concern that many people face every day. Stress, fear, and worry are all a part of life and cannot be completely avoided. However, if you become aware of how you are affected by anxiety, you can find ways to better manage it so that it doesn't overtake your life!

Here are a few of the symptoms you may feel if your anxiety has taken control of you:

- Fear or worry that is irrational and persistent in normal, everyday situations
- Avoidance of things you once liked or had no problems with previously
- Racing and/or irrational thoughts that are reoccurring and persistent
- Feeling overwhelmed and that you are losing control
- Feeling emotions like dread, irritability, sadness, more intensely than you have before
- Sleep problems, such as difficulty falling asleep, waking up often, or unable to fall back to sleep
- Problems staying organized or remembering things
- Physical symptoms, even if you don't think you are anxious, like racing or pounding heart, sweating, trembling, stomach upset, shortness of breath, headaches, fatigue, trembling, choking, chest pain, dizziness

Here are a few strategies that can be helpful to reduce your anxiety and keep it from taking over you:

- Become aware of what you are thinking/saying to yourself while anxious, such as listening to the "chatterbox" of messages going through your head. These messages often start with "What if ..." or "Should I..."
- Distract yourself from the thoughts by finding activities, pictures, and/or quotes to switch your mindset.
- Use thought replacements to actively change what you are thinking...Instead of, "I'm so stupid," tell yourself, "Nope, I just made a stupid mistake."
- Rate your anxiety on a scale from 1-10 to see where you are at and if what you are doing is helping.
- Set aside "worry time," such as 10-15 minutes at the end of the day, and tell yourself that you will worry during your "worry time" only. You can write down your worries in a worry journal to go over during "worry time."
- Practice mindfulness by bringing yourself back to the present moment instead of worrying about the past or future.
- Always remember to breathe! Breathing is the best way to calm an anxious body!

Here are a few helpful resources:

- www.helpguide.org
- www.troubledteen101.com
- www.pocketmindfulness.com
- *Coping with Anxiety: 10 Simple Ways to Relieve Anxiety, Fear & Worry* by Edmund Bourne
- *The 10 Best-Ever Anxiety Management Techniques* by Margaret Wehrenberg

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