

# EASING ANXIETY

## ANXIETY IS NORMAL

Anxiety is a normal part of life. Most people feel anxious before a big event or new challenge. Anxiety is a natural response of our autonomic nervous system designed to protect us when we are threatened or in danger. The response may increase our alertness or allow us to get into a “problem-solving” mode. When anxiety doesn’t fade after a threat though, it can interfere with daily life. Stress and anxiety that begin to make life difficult can be effectively managed and treated.



Symptoms of anxiety are both physical and emotional and are different for everyone. Emotional symptoms of anxiety include: feelings of apprehension and dread, difficulty concentrating, feeling tense, anticipating the worst-case scenario, irritability, and restlessness. Physical symptoms include a pounding heart, sweating, stomach upset or dizziness, shortness of breath, frequent urination or diarrhea, tremors and twitches, muscle tension, headaches, fatigue and insomnia.

Those who suffer from anxiety attacks frequently experience a surge of overwhelming panic. They may also feel like they’re losing control, have heart palpitations or chest pain, trouble breathing or a choking sensation, hyperventilation, hot flashes or chills, trembling or shaking, nausea or stomach cramps, or a feeling of being detached. While panic attacks may last only 10 or 20 minutes, to those who suffer from them, the symptoms can feel so overwhelming that the sufferer may feel like he or she will not survive it.

## SELF-CARE IMPROVES SYMPTOMS OF ANXIETY

Anxiety can be caused by an overly demanding schedule, stress, lack of self-care, or a stressful experience. It may also be a sign of an underlying anxiety disorder. Whatever the cause, anxiety responds well to self-care. Try these strategies to bring your anxiety under better control.

- Plan ahead to make time daily to do something you enjoy that is relaxing and fun. Hobbies are a great outlet that allows you to feel a sense of

### APPS FOR EASING ANXIETY

#### Mindshift

Developed for both the iPhone and Android, this app teaches relaxation skills, helps users develop new thinking, and suggests healthy activities. While it was designed with youth in mind, the skills can benefit people of all ages.

#### Bellybio Interactive Breathing

This app, designed for the iPhone, monitors your breathing and plays sounds when you relax. Using biofeedback techniques, it helps ease symptoms of stress and anxiety.

#### Take a Break!

Guided Meditations for Stress Relief was developed for the iPhone and Android. This app offers a 7-minute work break or 13-minute stress-relief meditation. Users can listen with or without the relaxing music and nature sounds.

accomplishment and take a break from your worries.

- Plan your plate: Eat small, frequent meals and snacks that include whole grains, fruits, and vegetables. A healthy diet that supports good health and good mood. Traditional “comfort foods” that are high in sugar, fat and refined grains can leave you with slumps in energy or spikes in blood sugar.
- Avoid caffeine, alcohol and nicotine – the things that may feel like they help you get through the day may actually increase your anxiety.
- Sleep 7-9 hours a night. A lack of sleep can allow your mind to get stuck on anxious thoughts and feelings.
- Exercise. Aim for 30 minutes or more of aerobic exercise like walking, jogging, or swimming on most days. Exercise releases endorphins that improve mood.
- Make a to-do list and prioritize what you need to get done. Ask for help and delegate items where you can.
- Practice relaxation techniques including meditation, guided imagery, progressive muscle relaxation, deep breathing or visualization. These techniques can help you in a moment of great anxiety and also improve feelings of general well-being.
- Use your support network – talk to a friend or family member about how you’re feeling. Try writing in a journal if that’s more comfortable for you.



## WHEN SELF-HELP ISN'T ENOUGH

If you've tried coping strategies but find that your symptoms of anxiety are causing extreme distress or disruption to your daily life, it's time to get more help. If you experience physical symptoms of anxiety, you may have an underlying medical condition that requires treatment. Your doctor can help you examine the causes of anxiety and address it properly through medication or a referral to a therapist that can provide behavioral therapy.