

**HRIC
HELPFUL
HINTS**

ANXIETY

The term anxiety is a general term used to describe nervousness, fear, apprehension, and worry that is very difficult to make go away and, at times, can get worse over time. It can affect how we feel emotionally and physically as well as how we behave. It interferes with daily activities like school, work, and/or relationships. Anxiety, Fear, and Stress are not the same, even though they are used interchangeably by people. Anxiety refers to different disorders. Disorders must involve a disruption of the person's daily functioning in order to be diagnosable. Examples of anxiety disorders include generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, and social anxiety disorder.

Anxiety disorders are usually accompanied with the 2 "P's" of anxiety: Perfectionism and Procrastination. When expecting everything in one's life to be "perfect" (an unattainable goal), anxiety symptoms increase which lead to procrastination and at times, a lack of effort (which can be misinterpreted as laziness). Black and white thinking patterns are usually associated with anxiety disorders as well. Individuals suffering with anxiety tend to categorize their behaviors, feelings, and thoughts in two categories (right/wrong, good/bad, success/failure). This difficulty in seeing life as it is, in grey, compounds the amount of anxiety that they experience. Of course, there are other factors to keep in mind that affect anxiety (genetics, neurological biology, personality factors, and behavioral patterns).

Here are some tips to help with anxiety:

- Exercise 20 minutes each day. This does not require a gym or weights. However, 20 minutes of cardio each day helps reduce anxiety symptoms. Dancing, jumping around, playing with your children, sports, running, fast walking, biking, etc are all alternatives to going to the gym.
- Minimize caffeine consumption to once a day and if possible, none. This includes coffee, black tea, Pepsi, Coke, energy drinks, and/or certain protein powders. Try herbal teas instead at night and if you need a pick-me-up for the day, dates and green apples will do the trick.

- Minimize refined sugar consumption.
- Maintain a proper sleep schedule, allowing yourself 7-9 hours of sleep each day.
- Remind yourself that you cannot control anything other than your behavior.
- Identify your anxiety triggers. Try to find a pattern in your feelings of anxiety. Keep a journal to help you do so.
- Implement relaxation techniques in your daily routine (deep breathing, meditation, listening to calming music, etc).
- Answer "what-if" questions. Anxiety involves being worried about the future. If you answer your "what-if" worries, it helps minimize the intensity and frequency of the anxiety thoughts.
- If you feel overwhelmed with anxiety throughout the day, schedule a time during the day to focus on those thoughts instead of allowing them to take over your whole day. Give yourself 30 minutes or an hour to go through them.
- Most importantly, accept your anxiety. If you try to fight it, it intensifies. If you are told not to think of a pink elephant, that's what you will think of, so if you are trying to calm yourself by saying that there's nothing wrong and you're fine, you'll feel the anxiety even more. Accept that you feel anxious, accept that it will dissipate with time, and accept that you will be ok when it's over.

HOW TO PREVENT AN ANXIETY ATTACK

- Breathe deeply in through your nose and out through your mouth
- Slowly look around you and find...
- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can touch
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can smell (or 2 smells you like)
- 1 emotion you feel

This is called GROUNDING - it can help when you feel like you've gone too far in your head and lost all control of your surroundings.

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