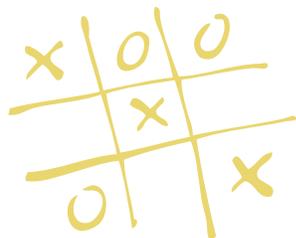


Coping with Anxiety

Everyone experiences stress and anxiety sometimes, but if it happens frequently, it can have a negative effect on your mind and body. Just like your muscles, you can't stress the brain all the time and expect it to work well. It needs to relax once in a while to recharge so you can focus more clearly. Below are some activities that can help you become more aware of your body and emotions, calm down, and find emotional and physical release of the tension you feel. If you practice them regularly, they can decrease your anxiety enough so you can think more clearly, focus better, and feel stronger and steadier. Most of these you can do nearly anywhere, without others even knowing.

Calm Breathing

- Sit comfortably and try to relax your body. Pay attention to your breathing and rest your hands on your stomach.
- Slowly inhale so that your belly pushes up on your fingers. Exhale slowly and notice your belly sink back down like a balloon deflating.
- Take an even slower, deeper breath, counting to 4, wait a few seconds, and exhale slowly to the count of 4.
- Repeat this calm, slow breath in and out at least 10 times. The most important thing is to breathe slowly.



Mindfulness Exercises

Being mindful means paying attention to the present moment, exactly as it is, not focusing on the future and all the things that might go wrong, as you do when you are anxious. Here is an example:

Come Back:

When you catch yourself being caught up in worries about the future or guilt and regret about the past, just notice that it is happening and simply and kindly say to yourself, "Come back." Then take a calming breath and focus on what you are doing right now.





Visualizations

Visualizations involve imagining something powerful in your head for a few minutes that can make you feel better afterwards. Here is an example of a visualization for you to try:

Mental Vacation:

Close your eyes and imagine yourself in a relaxing place. This place is where you feel completely safe because stress and worries hold no power over you. There is no “right” place — it should just feel relaxing and safe to you. Use all of your senses to put yourself there.



Laugh

Laughter is a great stress reliever and helps the body to relax tense muscles. It actually releases chemicals in the body that reduce tension and pain. So watch a funny movie or some hilarious YouTube videos, or call a friend who knows how to make you laugh.

Stay Active

This doesn't mean that you have to join a sports team, but find something active you like to do. Just 15–30 minutes of activity every day can help you feel less stressed.

Take Time for Yourself

If you are feeling stressed with a big deadline, build in some mini-breaks throughout the day, like cuddling with your pet, making a quick call to a friend who moved away, taking a shower, or making yourself a cup of tea or hot chocolate. You will be more productive and less stressed if you take mini-breaks, than if you push through and crash for hours on the weekend.