

Managing Anxiety: A Patient Guide

Anxiety is a normal human emotion. It becomes problematic when it is excessive, persistent, and interferes with daily life. Understanding and managing it is key to well-being.

1. Common Symptoms



Emotional Symptoms

- Excessive worry
- Nervousness
- Irritability
- Fear & Dread



Physical Symptoms

- Racing heart
- Shortness of breath
- Muscle tension
- Sweating
- Fatigue



2. Breathing Exercises



Diaphragmatic Breathing Technique

1. Inhale slowly through nose (3-5 seconds), belly expands.
2. Exhale slowly through pursed lips (5-7 seconds), belly contracts. Repeat.



4-7-8 Breathing Method

1. Inhale through nose (4 seconds).
2. Hold breath (7 seconds).
3. Exhale through mouth (8 seconds). Repeat 4 cycles.



3. Relaxation Techniques

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Tense and then relax muscle groups, starting from feet to head. Hold tension for 5 seconds, relax for 10 seconds.



Guided Imagery Description

Visualize a peaceful, safe place (e.g., beach, forest). Focus on sensory details: sights, sounds, smells, textures.



4. Mindfulness & Grounding



5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Technique

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can feel
- 3 things you can bear
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste (or a positive thought)

Simple Mindfulness Practice

Focus on the present moment without judgment. Observe thoughts and sensations as they arise and let them pass.



5. Lifestyle Strategies



Physical Activity

Aim for 150 minutes of moderate exercise per week.



Sleep Hygiene Tips

Maintain consistent sleep schedule, create a restful environment.



Limit Stimulants

Reduce caffeine and alcohol intake.

8. Benefits of Therapy



Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT):

- Most effective treatment for anxiety disorders.
- Benefits: Teaches coping skills, helps identify triggers, provides long-term strategies.
- Can be as effective as medication for many.
- Benefits often last after treatment ends.
- Available in-person, online, or by phone.

6. Cognitive Strategies

Common Thinking Patterns in Anxiety



Catastrophizing, Black-and white thinking, Overgeneralization.

Steps to Challenge Anxious Thoughts

1. Identify the thought.
2. Check the evidence.
3. Consider alternative perspectives.
4. Formulate a balanced thought.



7. When to Seek Help



Professional Help Signs:

Symptoms worsen, interfere with work/relationships, lead to avoidance.

Emergency Situations:

Immediate danger, self-harm risk.

Crisis Resources

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 988
Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741
Medical Emergencies: 911

9. Daily Habits Checklist

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Practiced Deep Breathing | <input type="checkbox"/> Avoided Excessive Caffeine |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Engaged in Physical Activity | <input type="checkbox"/> Practiced Mindfulness/Relaxation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Connected with Someone | <input type="checkbox"/> Prioritized Sleep |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spent time in Nature | <input type="checkbox"/> Challenged a Negative Thought |