



5 Tips for Managing Anxiety

Nearly 40 million Americans suffer from anxiety—persistent, excessive fear or worry in situations that are not threatening—according to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America. There are common times to feel anxiety, such as before a job interview or speaking at a large public event. However, anxiety becomes worrisome when these feelings linger or don't go away, causing everyday activities to become difficult.

The following are common symptoms to look out for if you think you may be experiencing an anxiety disorder:

- Feelings of dread
- Restlessness
- Trouble concentrating
- Anticipating the worst
- Rapid breathing
- Sweating, tremors and twitches
- Headaches, fatigue and insomnia
- Upset stomach

It's important to note that anxiety can present itself differently for everyone that experiences it. This means that not everyone will manage their anxiety in the same way. What works for one person may not work for another, and vice versa. That being said, if you're looking for ways to manage your anxiety, check out the following five tips:

1. Be Active Regularly

Regular physical activity can significantly improve your mental health. Exercise can help divert your attention away from things that trigger your anxiety. According to the American Psychological Association, regular exercise can increase concentration and willpower, which can help alleviate certain symptoms of anxiety.

To get started, choose a form of exercise you enjoy and that easily fits into your daily routine. The addition of physical activity should help you rather than add to your anxiety. Activities could include morning walks, yoga or running. It's important to choose what's most comfortable for you, and remember, start small.

2. Prioritize Good Sleeping Habits

Sleep has been shown to improve mental health. As an adult, you should aim for seven to nine hours of sleep per night, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Having a hard time sleeping can be a common symptom of anxiety. Therefore, if you're struggling getting a good night's rest, it's important to reach out to your doctor.

3. Limit Caffeine Consumption

Since caffeine is a stimulant, it can increase your chances of experiencing anxiety symptoms, such as increased heart rate. Everyone's reaction to caffeine varies, so it's important to monitor yours, especially if it's triggering any symptoms of anxiety. If you currently drink caffeine, try to avoid consuming more than your usual amount per day or replace your daily caffeinated beverage with something else, such as decaffeinated coffee or tea.

4. Eat a Balanced Diet

Low blood sugar, dehydration and chemicals found in certain foods can alter some people's moods. So, if you notice any changes in your mood after consuming certain foods, take note. If you notice a pattern in your mood from particular foods, try eliminating or limiting the amount of those foods you consume. Foods that can trigger negative emotions and mood fluctuations in certain people include artificial flavorings, artificial colorings, preservatives and sugar.

It's also important to practice a balanced diet with foods containing complex carbohydrates, fruits, vegetables and lean proteins. If you're struggling with how to build a balanced diet, consult with your doctor for further help.

5. Practice Mindfulness

Mindfulness can help bring awareness to the present moment. Since anxiety pertains to worried thoughts about the future, practicing mindfulness can help train your brain to refocus those thoughts. The most common way to practice mindfulness tends to be through meditation.

If you're looking to give meditation a try, it requires patience and practice. Start by finding a place in your home where you feel comfortable. Close your eyes and pay attention to your breath. As thoughts enter your mind, try to observe them without judgment and let them pass.

Summary

Anxiety affects millions of people, so chances are either you or someone you know is also impacted by anxiety. If you think you may have anxiety or any other mental health conditions, it's first important to seek professional help for your anxiety before trying to treat yourself at home. After consulting with professionals, consider trying out some of these tips for managing anxiety symptoms.

For more information on anxiety and tips on how to manage it, reach out to your health care provider.

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