



Lifestyle changes can help ease anxiety

Making lifestyle changes is not easy for anyone. But when you are dealing with anxiety, changing your daily habits and activities can be even harder. (Anxiety is fear or worry that gets in the way of everyday life.) Your efforts, however, may be well worth it.

There are ways that you can break bad habits. This will help ease your anxiety. Follow these tips below. You may start feeling better.

- Start slowly. At first, try making just one lifestyle change.
- Set realistic goals that will help you feel better. Don't set your goals too high.
- Pick a lifestyle change that you like. You'll have a better chance of sticking with a plan if you enjoy the activity.
- Keep at it. The results that you want may not happen right away. If you keep trying, however, the activities you choose will become easier. In time, your mood and ability to do things will improve.

Try these lifestyle changes

Here are some lifestyle tips that may help you cope with anxiety.

- **Limit caffeine.** Coffee and sodas can speed up how the body works. This can actually make worry and fear worse.
- **Avoid smoking.** People tend to smoke more when they are anxious and worried. However, if you smoke more, it only masks anxious feelings for a time. It does not get at the root cause of your problems. It can also lead to serious medical illnesses.
- **Exercise.** Regular exercise helps people of all ages feel more relaxed. It helps people accept what happens in life. It's best to choose an activity that you enjoy. Examples are biking, swimming, hiking, walking, etc. If you enjoy the exercise, you'll be more likely to stick with it.
- **Focus on good nutrition.** A balanced diet with food from all the food groups helps you maintain good mental and physical health.
- **Drink alcohol in moderation.** Regular, heavy use of alcohol (beer, wine or spirits) only masks anxious feelings for a short time. Drinking does not address what's causing your problems. It also contributes to poor health.
- **Be careful when taking medicine.** Some over-the-counter drugs may provide some relief from extreme worry. However, they don't solve a person's real problems. Before you take these drugs, see your doctor to be checked out. If you take medicine that a doctor has prescribed to manage worry and anxiety, remember to take these medicines just as prescribed. Talk to your doctor if you find yourself needing more medicine to get the same effect.
- **Get healthcare early.** Regular checkups can prevent disease by catching problems early. It's good to treat them before they get worse.

- **Spend time with friends and family.** People who talk to and help others tend to have fewer health problems. They have better coping skills.
- **Develop a daily routine.** Within reason, try to wake up, eat, go to sleep and do other usual tasks at the same time every day. This helps you stay in control of your life.
- **Pace yourself.** If possible, do not try to plan too many tasks in one day.

Tips on making positive changes

Here are some methods you can use to help you make good lifestyle changes.

- **Set realistic goals.** When thinking about setting goals, make sure that they are within your reach. Think about your finances. Think about how much time you'll have to go after your goals. Many people forget about these important things. As a result, they set unrealistic goals.
- **Be specific and put it in writing.** When thinking about your goals, be as exact as possible. People who set specific goals are more likely to succeed. Write down exactly what you want to achieve. Post it in a place where you will see it every day. This will remind you what you're trying to achieve.
- **Develop an action plan.** Create a timeline that shows the steps toward your goal. Set deadlines for all steps. Cross them off as you go. Sometimes, just crossing things off and watching your list get smaller can help. It can give you a sense of getting things done. It can help keep you going.
- **Believe in yourself.** Stay positive about your progress. Share your goal with a friend. Ask him/her to help keep your spirits up.
- **Reward yourself.** Be proud of what you've gotten done, even if it's a small success. Reaching a goal takes hard work. You should feel good about your efforts.
- **Develop a plan to fix roadblocks.** Sometimes you might reach a point in your action plan where you're no longer seeing progress. You might go back to old patterns. To keep moving forward, write down your plans to fight off sadness. Start back with your healthy habits as soon as possible. Your hard work will pay off!

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