

LIFE WITH ANXIETY

PEOPLE WITH ANXIETY SAY IT FEELS LIKE:



OVER OF AMERICAN
21 ADULTS
PERCENT BETWEEN THE
AGES OF 18-64
WILL HAVE DIAGNOSABLE
ANXIETY DISORDERS
IN A GIVEN YEAR
(THAT'S OVER 42.5 MILLION!)



#mentalillnessfeelslike



Share what life with an anxiety disorder feels like for you in words, images or video by tagging your social media posts with [#mentalillnessfeelslike](#).

Posts will be displayed at mentalhealthamerica.net/feelslike where you can also submit anonymously if you choose.

- Speak up about your own experiences
- Help others who may be struggling to explain what they are going through to figure out if they are showing signs of a mental illness
- Break down the discrimination and stigma surrounding mental illnesses
- Show others that they are not alone in their feelings and their symptoms

ANXIETY DISORDERS ARE REAL ILLNESSES THAT ARE BASED ON EXTREME FEAR. THEY AFFECT:



THE BODY

Causing: chest pain, heart palpitations, shortness of breath, dizziness, stomach discomfort, nausea, fatigue, trembling, muscle tension, headaches, tingling in the hands and feet, or trouble sleeping.



THOUGHTS

Causing: exaggerated worry about everyday life, fear of dying, repeated unwanted thoughts, nightmares or flashbacks, irritability, anger, trouble focusing, numbing of emotions, or anticipating the worst outcome to a situation even though it is unlikely.



BEHAVIORS

Causing: rituals that seem impossible to control, being easily startled, avoidance of people, places and/or things, limiting life experiences, inability to sit still, easily losing one's temper, or being snappy with others.

HAVING AN ANXIETY DISORDER IS NOT:

- Just stressing out
- Being a "neat freak"
- Being excitable
- Having feelings of anticipation before a big event
- An excuse to get attention
- Being nervous with good reason
- Fear in a dangerous situation
- Being shy
- A choice
- A sign of weakness
- A character flaw

TIPS FOR TACKLING ANXIETY



Call someone you trust. Let them know that your anxiety has gotten the best of you and that you need their support. That may mean asking them to stay on the line with you until you've worked through your symptoms, or coming over to keep you company and help put your mind at ease. If you can't get in touch with a friend or family member, go to www.warmline.org to find someone to talk to in your state.



Do something physical. Take a brisk walk, go up and down the stairs, or do some jumping jacks. Give your body a way to physically use up some of its excess energy.



Distract yourself—try an adult coloring book, knit or crochet, draw. Repetitive activities can have a calming effect similar to meditation. For free, printable coloring pages, visit www.coloring-pages-adults.com.



Go somewhere safe and quiet, and challenge yourself to have a full-blown anxiety attack. Many people find that directly challenging themselves to have an anxiety attack actually has the opposite effect.



Deep breathing can help. One popular technique is belly breathing: Lay on your back and breathe in through your nose, watching your belly rise as you inhale. Hold your breath for a few seconds then exhale deeply through your mouth, watching your belly fall as you exhale. Repeat until you notice yourself feeling more relaxed. Alternatively, singing can also regulate your breathing if you find yourself starting to hyperventilate.



Write it down. Getting thoughts out of your head and onto paper can be helpful. This could be making a to-do list to organize your thoughts if your mind is racing and it's hard to focus, or writing in a journal to express what is bothering you.



Focus on things you can control and take action. Pick out your clothes for the week, plan your meals for the next couple days, organize your desk—taking care of small things empowers you to take charge when it comes to larger tasks.

FIND HELP NEAR YOU

Locate an MHA Affiliate in your area by visiting mentalhealthamerica.net/find-affiliate

Find treatment providers using SAMHSA's Treatment Locator at findtreatment.samhsa.gov

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www.mentalhealthamerica.net

SOME OF THE MOST COMMON TYPES OF ANXIETY DISORDERS INCLUDE:

Panic Disorder, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Phobias, General Anxiety Disorder, and Social Anxiety Disorder.

To learn more visit:
mentalhealthamerica.net/anxiety

SCREENING CAN HELP CATCH MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS EARLY—B4STAGE4.

If you think you may be showing signs of an anxiety disorder, take a screen at mhascreening.org.

A screening is not a diagnosis, but it can be a helpful tool for starting a conversation with your doctor or a loved one about your mental health.



www.mhascreening.org

Anonymous • Free • Confidential

If you or someone you know is in crisis, call 1-800-273-TALK (8255), go to your local Emergency Room or call 911.


Mental Health America
B4Stage4

SOURCES

1 KESSLER, R. C., PETUKHOVA, M., SAMPSON, N. A., ZASLAVSKY, A. M., & WITTCHEN, H.-U. (2012). Twelve-month and lifetime prevalence and lifetime morbid risk of anxiety and mood disorders in the United States. *International Journal of Methods in Psychiatric Research*, 21(3), 169–184. <http://doi.org/10.1002/mpr.1359>

2 http://files.shareholder.com/downloads/NFLX/474695957x0821407/DB785B50-90FE-44DA-9F5B-37DBF0DCD0E1/Q1_15_Earnings_Letter_final_tables.pdf