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5 Useful Tips to Help Reduce Anxiety

Our Friends · Friday, December 15th, 2023

It is estimated that **40 million adults** aged 18 and older suffer from anxiety in the United States. That makes anxiety disorders the most common mental illness in the country. ‘Anxiety’ is actually an umbrella term that refers to many different conditions, all of which exhibit similar symptoms.

In other words, all of us will likely experience anxiety at some point in our lives. This does not necessarily mean that we have an anxiety disorder, as feelings of nervousness and panic can come and go. However, people may experience prolonged periods of anxiety even if it is temporary. As a result, it is important to be equipped with the tools to deal with anxiety whenever it arises.

Today, we will be talking about 5 ways you might be able to combat anxiety without harmful pharmaceuticals. But first, let’s talk a little bit about the causes of anxiety in the first place.

What is Anxiety... and What Causes it?

In general, anxiety is a feeling of unease – it can vary in severity from mild and ignorable, to severe and panic-inducing. If feelings of anxiousness persist, you may be suffering from an anxiety disorder. These disorders include:

- **Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD):** A general feeling of anxiety that persists no matter the situation. It may fluctuate a little, but the uneasiness is never far away. Many people with GAD also suffer from depression.
- **Panic Disorder:** Sufferers of PD experience regular attacks of panic or fear. These attacks may be triggered by certain situations.
- **Phobias:** Fears like agoraphobia and claustrophobia can fall under the umbrella of anxiety. If your anxiety about these situations prevents you from doing things, it may be a disorder.
- **Social anxiety disorder (SAD):** If you are afraid of social situations and thinking about them leads to feelings of unease and panic, you may be suffering from social anxiety disorder, also called social phobia.

Of course, there is quite a bit of overlap between these categories. It can be hard to pinpoint exactly which anxiety disorder you may be experiencing, but many of them are treated in a similar way.

Unfortunately, not much is known about the causes of anxiety disorders, and that can make them hard to treat.

The following may be factors that increase your likelihood of contracting an anxiety disorder:

- Overactivity in regions of the brain involved in emotions and behavior
- An imbalance of brain chemicals like serotonin
- Genetics; you may be 5x more likely to develop GAD if you have a relative with the condition
- A history of traumatic experiences
- Long-term health conditions like chronic pain
- A history of substance abuse

Some people also develop anxiety disorders without obvious reason; if you experience regular and chronic feelings of anxiety, there are some things you can do to help yourself. Here are our top five tips for feeling less anxious.

5 Tips for Reducing Anxiety

Tip #1 | Write Down Your Worries

Though it sounds cliché, writing a journal can actually be very therapeutic. In fact, it doesn't have to be a journal – you can write out your thoughts and feelings in a mind map, a bullet point list, or however you so choose.

The fact is that writing things down can really help you to process them. If you don't know exactly what is making you anxious, you might find that the source of your fears emerges while you are writing. Once you know, you might be able to better tackle your fears head on.

Try setting aside some time each day to write. This may be in the morning, helping you to organize and focus on your tasks for the day; or it may be in the evening, so you can reflect on what made you anxious and how you got around it. You might also like to write before social events that make you nervous.

Please note, however, that you should not write things down immediately after a traumatic event, as this can solidify the memory and make it harder to get over. Experts recommend waiting for a month or two before writing down your feelings about such an event.

Tip #2 | Get Out and Socialize

Any mental illness can benefit from a good support network. Having close friends and family can help you in a multitude of ways. First of all, they can help you to see things in a different light and perhaps convince you that things aren't as scary as they may first seem.

Secondly, friends and family can support you in challenging yourself. Ever heard of the daring expression “face your fears”? Well, there's a reason it's such a well-known phrase.

By tackling your fears head-on, you may find that it is not so scary after all. It's very easy to passively deal with your anxiety and stay home where you feel safe, but this is not the way to deal with it. We're not saying this is easy – it's completely the opposite! But having good friends to help you can really make sure you make progress.

This is especially more difficult if you suffer from social anxiety. Unfortunately, the way around it is to push yourself to socialize, even if this is just with a close friend or family member you trust.

Tip #3 | Avoid Unhealthy Habits

Since it is thought that alcohol and drugs may be a factor in causing anxiety, it is best to avoid them if you suffer from the disorder. Many people erroneously believe that taking these substances will make them feel better, and the truth is that they might – but only for a short while.

Alcohol has a wonderful ability to relax you; we all need a little “Dutch Courage” now and then. But the relaxant effect it has on you is due to a chemical change in your brain, and when the

pleasant feelings fade and your body is forced to process the alcohol, your anxiety may worsen. In fact, anxiety and depression can be symptoms of a hangover.

The same thing can happen with narcotics. If you know that you have an addictive personality, the cycle of taking drugs and alcohol can continue to worsen your mental health. As a result, it's best to avoid these substances as much as you can.

Tip #4 | Practice Calming Down

This one sounds simple. In actual fact, calming down in a moment of panic can be difficult; first you have to check yourself to notice you are panicking, and then you have to work through it.

A simple way to do this is to practise breathing exercises. When you panic, you often fall into a disrupted pattern of breathing which makes you hyperventilate, worsening the symptoms of anxiety. A good breathing exercise to try is to breathe in through your nose for four seconds, hold for seven seconds, and then breathe out through your mouth for eight seconds.

Like we said, it can be hard to do this in a moment of panic. In order to get the most out of this, try practising it every day – even when you are not feeling anxious or panicky. That way, when a situation does arise, you'll know exactly what to do. You can also try out guided meditation sessions online to see if meditating helps you to process your thoughts better.

Tip #5 | Try Out CBD!

If nothing is working for you, you may be tempted to try out anxiety medication. In most cases, you will be prescribed medications that are the same as what is used for depression. This includes the likes of Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs) and Serotonin and Noradrenaline Reuptake Inhibitors (SNRIs). Benzodiazepines are also very common medications for anxiety. While these do work for some patients – but not all – they also come with some pretty nasty side effects.

Side effects of anti-anxiety medications includes nausea and vomiting, insomnia and drowsiness, a low sex drive, headaches, sweating, weight gain, and in some cases even depression. Some patients also become addicted.

Is there another option?

Well, it turns out that there is a natural alternative which may be able to reduce some of the symptoms of anxiety: Cannabidiol. Otherwise known as **hemp products**, cannabidiol is an active compound that comes from the Cannabis sativa plant. It is currently in popular usage as a wellness supplement for potential therapeutic benefits, one of which is its application as an anxiolytic, or an anti-anxiety drug.

The **National Institute of Drug Abuse** says that CBD has been indicated to reduce stress in animal models. These rodent models showed reduced symptoms of Generalized Anxiety Disorder after taking CBD. Most studies regarding CBD are done on rodents, but some have been carried out on humans.

For example, a **well-cited study** from the Journal of Psychopharmacology in 2011 involved human participants. The volunteers, all of whom exhibited symptoms of Social Anxiety Disorder and who had not yet been treated using any other method, were given either 400 mg of CBD or a placebo. Those who took the CBD showed significantly reduced anxiety levels than those using the placebo.

Tips for Getting Rid of Anxiety: A General Summary

While the results so far show that CBD could be a viable alternative, there's also another reason to give it a shot. According to **a report** from the World Health Organization, CBD is generally safe and well-tolerated in humans, is non-addictive, and has very few side effects; those which do appear are not serious.

If you are struggling with anxiety and are not sure where to turn, you could always give CBD a try. Sublingual tinctures and capsules are ideal for GAD sufferers, while those with social phobia could try vaping CBD for fast relief. If it doesn't work, then there are always other options; but since CBD is safe and could be effective, there's no reason not to try.

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