

When Anxiety Becomes Too Much

Anxiety has been called the “rust of life.” It can creep up on us, wearing away at our health and our enjoyment of life. In the worst cases, it gets in the way of work and relationships.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, about 40 million American adults suffer from anxiety disorders each year. Symptoms can include fears of specific things or situations, sudden feelings of panic, or worries that just don't go away. Fortunately, there are many effective treatments for anxiety disorders. If worries, phobias or similar feelings are interfering with your life, you may benefit from some help. Call your EAP for an evaluation and possible referral.

Strategies for calming anxiety

Even if you do not have an anxiety disorder, anxiety can be hard to handle. Stress and worries can keep you up at night. They can lead you to eat poorly or misuse drugs or alcohol. They can make you feel irritable, depressed and isolated.

So, how can you cope with everyday stresses in healthy ways? Here are a few strategies that can help:

- **Work on being optimistic.** When you catch yourself having a negative thought, come up with a healthier, more positive spin on the situation.
- **Take time to relax.** Make a point of scheduling some quiet time. If music soothes you, have your favorites playing.

Need help?

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- **Bring the laughter back into your life.**
A good laugh releases tension. Perhaps you're a “Napoleon Dynamite” fan. Or maybe it's anything with the Marx Brothers. Or what about that friend who always cracks you up? Do something to reconnect your funny bone.
- **Take actions that make you feel in control.**
Organize your desk and your closet. Sharpen your financial planning skills. Get help caring for your elderly relative, instead of trying to juggle everything alone. If you're feeling overwhelmed by “life issues,” call your EAP for the help you need.
- **Exercise, eat right and develop other healthy habits.** Exercise is a great way to boost your mood and soothe anxiety. And, living well will give you fewer health problems to worry about!
- **Avoid self-medication.** Alcohol and other substances may make you feel less anxious in the moment, but that initial effect is deceptive. Alcohol actually increases anxiety, and inhibits your body's ability to combat stress.
- **Reach out.** The strategies listed above can be helpful, but if your anxiety is intense they may not be enough. If you're so overwhelmed by worry that you feel you really can't help yourself, call your EAP right away.

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