

## Ten Things You Can Do to Reduce Your Anxiety\*

1. **Don't let your anxious feelings hijack the rest of your brain** by repetitively worrying about something you feel anxious about. Instead, develop a plan for what you will do if what you're anxious about happens.
2. **Do a mindfulness exercise that brings your attention to the present**, not the realm of future worry or past pain. Slowly, name five things around you that you can see, four things that you can touch, three things that you can hear, two things you can smell and one thing you can taste. Remind yourself that you are presently safe.
3. **Tell your anxiety to be quiet** - "Anxiety is just a feeling and it has been wrong before."
4. **Speak God's truth to pull you out of anxious feelings and hypothetical worries.** Examples include Malachi 3:6, Isaiah 43:1, Romans 8:38-39, and Matthew 6:25-34, but ask God to give you a personal verse you can repeat to yourself as soon as you start feeling anxious or a worry enters your head.
5. **Sleep longer.** During sleep, special channels in the brain open up to allow for cerebrospinal fluid to clean away metabolic breakdown products, like leftover stress hormones. These "brain trash" clearing channels *only* open during sleep. A good night's bath for your brain helps you to have a fresh start in the morning.
6. **Eat healthier.** Sugar amplifies the body and brain's anxiety response, so avoid the temptation to eat a carton of ice cream. Vitamin C reduces the body's stress hormone, so load up on fruits, and leafy greens, as well as healthy proteins, and lots of water (half an ounce to an ounce of water for each pound you weigh, every day).
7. **Exercise regularly.** Even the habit of regular mild exercise has been found to increase the levels of brain neurotransmitters involved in a positive mood and outlook. For some, regular exercise is as effective as medication in treating depression and anxiety. Aim for 3 to 5 sessions per week of 45-60 minutes of either aerobic exercise or resistance training.
8. **Manage your media exposure.** Time spent in social media has been found to contribute to higher anxiety and depression. News media exposure and anxiety have also been found to be positively related. Create three media/phone-free zones (e.g., in the car, at the dinner table, your bedroom) to set easy-to-keep limits.
9. **Use a worry app to contain your worries.** ReachOut WorryTime for iPhones/iPads allows you to list your worries and to set a specific time to worry about them, so they aren't with you all day long. The app also prompts you to plan, rather than just worry, as well as to throw away useless worries (great for visual learners).
10. **Develop the habit of gratitude.** We can get stuck in an endless loop between feeling anxious and worrying. Gratitude is the "eject button" that boosts you out of that negative feedback loop. Use the GLAD technique to shift your brain from worry and anxiety – (G) something you are grateful for, (L) something you learned, (A) something you accomplished, and (D) something that delighted you. Write a thank you note to someone. Or simply end each day by naming three things you are thankful for. Research has shown that gratitude is clinically effective in treating anxiety and depression, sometimes as effective as antidepressants. (Philippians 4:8)

\*Anxiety is a universal human emotion. Regularly using these tips should lessen your anxiety and worry. However, if your anxiety is interfering with your relationships and work, consider seeing a physician or therapist for professional treatment. Anxiety disorders are highly treatable.