

When Anxiety Attacks

10 Tips To Help You Cope

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It can come from out of nowhere. One minute, you're shopping and looking for the perfect sweater to match your new pants. The next minute, you're breathing heavily, your heart is beating wildly, and you're very worried—sometimes for no reason at all.

If you find yourself worrying more than you'd like to, you're not alone. In fact, research from the Anxiety Disorders Association of America shows that nearly 40 million adults suffer from anxiety every day. This makes anxiety and related stress disorders the most common type of mental health problems in the United States. To help you cope when anxiety attacks, try one of these 10 tips:

1. Control your breathing. If you find you are breathing rapidly, breathe slowly in and out and try to focus on counting your breaths and controlling your breathing.
2. Walk it off. Take a walk around your floor, go up to the roof, or take a walk around the building.
3. Go with it. Don't attempt to fight your way out of a panic attack, this will simply make it worse. Instead, accept the feelings, and tell yourself that these feelings will pass. Eventually the panic will subside.
4. Distract yourself. Do a puzzle, try sudoku, play a game online, or write an email.
5. Use your imagination. Try to focus outside of yourself during an attack. Listen to some music or do a pleasurable task while waiting for the panic to subside.
6. Use a relaxation technique. First close your eyes and breathe slowly and deeply. Locate any areas of tension and imagine them disappearing. Then, relax each part of the body, bit by bit, from the feet upwards. Think of warmth and heaviness. After 20 minutes of doing this, take some deep breaths and stretch.
7. Schedule worry time. Designate a small amount of time (maybe 30 minutes or less) to worrying/analysis of what's worrying you. Then, during worry time, do the following exercise:

On a piece of paper, make a chart with four columns. In column 1, write down all the things you are worried about. In column 2, write down how likely that event is to happen (is it 10% likely, 25%?). In column 3, write down all the "if/thens" that come to mind when you think about what's bothering you. In column 4, write down some things you can actively do if the worst case scenario events happen or what you can do now to prevent the worst case scenarios from happening.

Here's an example:

What's bothering me?	How likely is this to happen?	If this happens, what then?	If the worst case scenario happens?
I may lose my job.	30% because my company just had a layoff.	Then I will need to look for a new job, I don't know how long that might take, maybe I will not be able to pay the bills	Then I will need to polish up my resume, get into contact with a networking group, call some old contacts, reach out to some connections, post my resume online, etc... - OR - I could be proactive and talk to my supervisor about the company's future plans, how I can be helpful; I could also connect now with some old contacts or join a networking group.

Sometimes just by thinking a worrisome thought all the way through and coming up with a solution, we find we feel much better.

8. Flip your thoughts. If you're finding yourself telling yourself some very negative things, try challenging yourself to come up with one good thing about you or the situation for every one negative thing.
9. Reach out to friends and family. If you're finding yourself really getting upset, reach out to a friend, call someone you care about, just talk it out.
10. Your body can handle stress. Under times of extreme stress, you might have physical symptoms that scare you. If so, call your doctor and talk over your concerns. It's likely you will hear that your symptoms are due to an over-sensitized nervous system. If so, they are temporary feelings and will go away.