

Tips for managing anxiety



What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a common condition. It's a normal, human reaction to stressful situations. Anxiety disorders affect one in three women at some stage in their life.

There are several women's health conditions that are associated with anxiety. For example, endometriosis and polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS). Different life stages can also cause anxiety, such as puberty, pregnancy, after childbirth and menopause.

It's good to know there are many ways to manage anxiety. You may need to try different approaches before you find one that helps you.

Be kind to yourself

- Try not to judge yourself. Instead, acknowledge your feelings and remember you're doing the best you can.
- Be aware of your self-talk – try to make sure it's kind rather than critical.
- Check in with your thinking during the day – make sure you're being fair and balanced.

Change negative thoughts to positive thoughts

- Change negative thoughts like, 'I can't do this' to positive thoughts like, 'It's hard, but I will get through this.'
- Try to imagine a calm or coping thought. For example, 'This too will pass.'
- Remember that anxiety is a feeling, not a fact.

Identify and understand your triggers

- Try to recognise your triggers (what makes you feel anxious) and think about how you might reduce your anxiety during these times. For example, if you feel anxious about going to a social function, you could organise to go with a friend.

Deep breathing

- Try deep breathing as part of your daily routine or when you start to feel anxious.
- Focus on your breath. Take a slow, deep breath through your nose and let it fill your tummy. Then breathe out gently through your mouth. When you breathe in, imagine you're bringing energy into your body. When you breathe out, let go of any tension in your body.

Mindfulness

- Mindfulness is when you pay attention to what's happening in the present moment. It helps you focus on one thing at a time.
- Remember that mindfulness takes focus and practice, so keep trying!
- Next time you go for a walk, breathe deeply and notice what's happening around you. Focus on what you see, hear, smell, feel and taste. Be interested and curious. Try to stay in the moment.

Progressive muscle relaxation

- Progressive muscle relaxation can help to reduce muscle tension when you feel anxious.
- Try tensing different muscle groups (e.g. shoulders) then slowly relaxing them.

Meditation

- Meditation is a type of mind-body relaxation therapy that helps you concentrate your mind on one thing, such as breathing, body movements, sounds or even a mantra (chant).
- Meditation can help you stay calm and focused on the present moment, rather than worrying about the past or future.
- There are many different types of meditation, including mindfulness meditation, visualisation meditation and yoga.

Talk to someone you trust

- When you share your feelings with people you trust, you will feel better and may even learn some new strategies. For example, you might talk to your partner, a friend, a family member or a work colleague.

Change your focus

- It can be helpful to change your focus from thinking to doing. You can distract yourself with things like household tasks or creative activities like writing in a journal or knitting.

Look after yourself

- Your mood and anxiety may improve when you look after your health. For example, try to eat healthy foods, avoid sugary drinks, do regular physical activity and develop good sleep habits.

When to see your doctor

See your doctor if anxiety affects your daily life or you feel fearful most of the time. The earlier you seek help, the sooner you will feel better.

For more information, resources and references, visit jeanhailes.org.au/health-a-z/anxiety