

Strategies to Help Relieve Anxiety

1. Positive Self-Talk

To increase emotional comfort, it's imperative to practice reassuring and realistic self-talk. When anxious, practice self-talk phrases such as:

“This feeling will pass.”

“I will get through this.”

“I am feeling anxious now, but I have the power make myself calm.”

“I can feel my heart rate slowing down.”

Devise an affirmation — a short, clear, positive statement that focuses on your coping abilities. Affirmations are a good way to silence the self-critical voice we all carry with us that only adds to our stress. The next time you feel as if your life is one disaster after another, repeat 10 times, “I feel calm. I can handle this.”

2. Relaxation Techniques

- **Progressive Muscle Relaxation:** This technique teaches you how to relax your muscles through a two-step process. First, you systematically tense particular muscle groups in your body, such as your neck and shoulders. Next, you release the tension and notice how your muscles feel when you relax them. This exercise will help you to lower your overall tension and stress levels, and help you relax when you are feeling anxious. There are many videos that you can access online.
- **Be Careful:** Take care not to hurt yourself while tensing your muscles. You should never feel intense or shooting pain while completing this exercise. Make the muscle tension deliberate, yet gentle. If you have problems with pulled muscles, broken bones, or any medical issues that would hinder physical activity, consult your doctor first.
- **Yoga:** Yoga is a mind-body practice that combines physical poses, controlled breathing, and meditation or relaxation. The combination of deep breathing techniques and poses makes this activity work to reduce stress, lower blood pressure and lower your heart rate.
- **Tai Chi:** If you're looking for a way to reduce stress, consider tai chi (TIE-CHEE). Originally developed for self-defense, tai chi has evolved into a graceful form of exercise that's now used for stress reduction and a variety of other health conditions. Often described as meditation in motion, tai chi promotes serenity through gentle, flowing movements.
- **Guided Meditatio:** Meditation can remove stress and replace it with a dose of inner peace. It's one of the best tools we have to balance our emotions, deal with physical and psychological distress, and promote the peace of the present moment. But it can be tough to meditate without a teacher or guide. Enter guided meditations. Meditating on your own requires some effort, while guided meditations literally walk you through a meditation and help you find a calm and peaceful state—one step at a time. There are numerous videos online that provide free guided meditation.



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3. Exercise

Exercise doesn't necessarily mean power lifting at the gym or training for a marathon. A quiet, meditative stroll can do wonders for stress relief, especially when we step outdoors. Try not to rush, and take whatever pace feels most natural. If your time does not permit that, a short walk around the office or simply standing up to stretch during a break at work can offer immediate relief in a stressful situation. Getting your blood moving releases endorphins and can improve your mood almost instantaneously.

4. Taking Care of Yourself

- Eat well-balanced meals. Do not skip any meals. Do keep healthful, energy-boosting snacks on hand.
- Limit alcohol and caffeine, which can aggravate anxiety and trigger panic attacks.
- Get enough sleep. When stressed, your body needs additional sleep and rest.
- Drink tea. By now most of us know about the calming properties of chamomile tea. Also, one study found that drinking black tea leads to lower post-stress cortisol levels and greater feelings of relaxation.
- Laugh it off. Laughter can reduce the physical effects of stress (like fatigue) on the body.

5. Listening to Music

If you're feeling overwhelmed by a stressful situation, try taking a break and listening to relaxing music. Playing calm music has a positive effect on the brain and body, can lower blood pressure, and reduce cortisol, a hormone linked to stress.

6. Trying Alternative Healing Therapies

Acupuncture, chiropractic homeopathy, and massage therapy all have something to offer people with anxiety. It is also a positive action to care for ourselves by doing something new. Just the action empowers us and gives us confidence that we can do something. This alone helps.

7. Writing It Out

Keeping a journal may be one way to effectively relieve stress-related symptoms due to its meditative and reflective effects.

A gratitude journal is one way you can really help us put things in perspective, so pick a time every day to write down a few things that make you happy.

Another way is to write a list of your skills and knowledge. Write down things that you know through logic that counter what the anxiety is telling you. Then read the list two to three times a day. By knowing your arguments, you will be less afraid of anxiety when it comes. Anxiety makes us forget what we know, making us vulnerable to believing anxiety's lies. Having read the list repeatedly, our knowledge and trust in ourselves will not falter. The information will be up front in our brain and lessen the anxiety.

Find inspiration for caring for a loved one in the book *Love Cares: Encouraging Words and Stories from an Alzheimer's Caregiver* from AdventHealthPress.com
adventhealth.com/adventhealth-press/love-cares-encouraging-words-and-stories-alzheimers-caregiver

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8. Soaking It Up

When you have the time, nothing is more stress relieving than a hot bath. But when you don't have time, do the next-best thing. Wash your face or even just your hands and arms with hot water. The key is to imagine that you're taking a hot bath. It's basically a visualization exercise, but the hot water makes it feel real.

9. Aromatherapy

Studies suggest aromatherapy can be a good way to relieve stress. Oils of anise, basil, bay, chamomile, eucalyptus, lavender, peppermint, rose and thyme are all soothing. Place a few pieces of rock salt in a small vial, then add a couple of drops of the oil of your choice (the rock salt absorbs the oil and is much less risky to carry around in your purse than a bottle of oil). Open the vial and breathe in the scent whenever you need a quick stress release. Look for the oils in your local health food store.

10. Talking to Someone

- Tell friends and family you're feeling overwhelmed, and let them know how they can help you.
- Use a professional coach to help learn to handle your anxiety. Talk to a therapist or physician for professional help.

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adventhealth.com/adventhealth-press/love-cares-encouraging-words-and-stories-alzheimers-caregiver