

LIFESTYLE CHOICES FOR DEALING WITH ANXIETY

Loneliness and isolation set the stage for anxiety. Reaching out to others, seeing friends, joining groups, or sharing with someone trusted are all healthy choices for dealing with anxiety.

Working with a psychotherapist in a somatic modality like Hakomi can also be a powerful way to address and release trauma and other stressful experiences that have become stuck in the body.

Relaxation techniques

Relaxation techniques help with anxiety.

If one gets angry, agitated, or keyed up when stressed, going into the “fight” response, a quiet activity like meditation, deep breathing, or guided imagery is a good choice. Breathing can help manage an acute attack.

If one becomes depressed, withdrawn, or spaced out under stress, going into “flight” response, stimulating and energizing activities are good choices, like rhythmic exercises, massage or yoga.

If one “freezes” or become “stuck” under stress, in the “fright” response, get the nervous system to a fight or flight response by running or dancing.

TRE™ (Tension/Trauma Releasing Exercises)

TRE is a relaxation technique that is comprised of six simple exercises to release tension in the muscles and relax the mind’s anxiety. A gentle vibration (called neurogenic tremors) reaches into the core and reverberates along the spine, releasing tension throughout the body. Blocked energy experienced as tension discharges, leaving a sense of wellbeing and peacefulness.

Exercise is a natural stress reducer and anxiety reliever. One should aim for at least 30 minutes of aerobic exercise on most days.

Lack of sleep can exacerbate anxious thoughts and feelings, so those with anxiety should get seven to nine hours of quality sleep a night. For troubled sleep, adopting smart sleep habits can make a big difference. Turning off all electronics at least an hour before bed, sleeping in a room that is completely dark and getting to sleep by 10 so the adrenal system can rejuvenate are all helpful in reducing stress and anxiety.

If one struggles with anxiety, reducing caffeine and alcohol intake or cutting them out completely will help.

Strategies like journaling, making art, dialoging with anxious thoughts, and learning to sit with discomfort and uncertainty can significantly reduce anxiety.

Diet

Another important lifestyle change includes diet. Eat foods that supply valuable minerals like calcium, magnesium, phosphorus and potassium. Include apricots, asparagus, avocados, bananas, broccoli, blackstrap molasses, brewer's yeast, flaxseed, brown rice, dried fruits, dulse, figs, salmon, garlic, green leafy vegetables, legumes, raw nuts and seeds, whole grains, and yogurt.

Supplements

Supplementing with the following can also help decrease anxiety.

L-theanine is an amino acid found in tea. It has a calming effect and reduces physiological responses to stress. It also raises levels of GABA, the calming neurotransmitter. It has properties that offer protection against environmental neurotoxins, as well. A typical supplemental dose of L-theanine is 50 to 200 mg. (The Antianxiety Food Solution, Trudy Scott)

Lactium is a supplement made from the casein protein in milk. It has been shown to reduce stress-related symptoms, including anxiety, social problems and digestive issues. This product also lowers levels of the stress hormone cortisol. (The Antianxiety Food Solution, Trudy Scott)

Sometimes classed as one of the B vitamins, **Inositol** can be helpful as it raises serotonin levels. It also helps stabilize blood glucose levels, by increasing the action of insulin and decreasing insulin resistance. It has a calming affect, helps in combating depression, panic attacks, mood swings, obsessive-compulsive disorder, bipolar disorder and anxiety. Stress often causes hair loss, and inositol can help. It is known as the anti-alopecia vitamin. 2000-4000mg/day is a typical dosage, but levels of 12,000-18,000mg/day have been given for OCD and depression.

DL-Phenylalanine (DLPA) consists of both D-phenylalanine and L-phenylalanine, and is much more potent than either of these amino acids taken alone.

L-Glutamine is in foods such as beef, chicken, eggs, cabbage, beets and spinach, and is the precursor to the amino acid GABA. GABA is the primary inhibitory neurotransmitter in your brain, meaning that it has a calming effect on your nervous system. Because glutamine increases GABA production, it is thought that glutamine can also help to decrease symptoms of anxiety.

If depression comes with anxiety and panic, then the amino acid **Gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA)**, also the most calming neurotransmitter, can be taken. It can eliminate all feelings of anxiety and panic. Take 250mg/day initially, increasing till the optimum is found. Vitamin B6 is a necessary co-factor, take 25mg/day. It is safe to go up to 1000mg/day. GABA is difficult to administer, as it's easy to exceed what is needed and then symptoms return, so it should be increased very slowly.