



ANXIETY & PANIC

What You Need To Know

Anxiety is a normal human response that every individual may experience from time to time. Some people who experience anxiety more often than others may have a difficult time trying to keep their anxiety and panic under control. The information provided here will help identify signs and symptoms of anxiety and also recommend a few suggestions for managing these symptoms. Learn more about what is happening and resources that may assist you in leading a more relaxed lifestyle.

Signs & Symptoms

- ◆ Shortness of Breath
- ◆ Dizziness, unsteadiness, or faintness
- ◆ Trembling and shaking
- ◆ A feeling of choking
- ◆ Sweating
- ◆ Nausea and abdominal distress
- ◆ Blurry vision

- ◆ Depersonalization, or a feeling of unreality – as if you are “not all there”
- ◆ Numbness or tingling in hands and feet
- ◆ Hot and cold flashes
- ◆ Chest pain and discomfort
- ◆ Fears of losing control or even death



Rate Your Anxiety

When you are feeling anxious and may be in a state of panic, try to rate your level of anxiety from one to ten. Your anxiety will be either more or less intense during different situations. Your own thoughts and perceptions of a situation can cause a level two to increase to a level ten. This is often the first step in being able to effectively manage your symptoms. It can help you to understand that you have different levels of anxiety during different times of the day.

Coping Techniques

Once you rate your anxiety, try to begin some coping techniques. These will help you deal with the situation at hand and help you feel relaxed. Some techniques are recommended here.

Deep Breathing



Deep breathing is a very efficient and simple technique that can be used to help your body relax. It can be performed at any time or place, such as when you are walking to class, or before speaking in front of a group of people.

- ◆ Practice slow, gentle breathing on a regular basis, even when you are not feeling anxious. This will help you when you really do need to implement this practice.
- ◆ Take a slow, deep breath in through your nose, expanding your diaphragm. A good tip is your stomach should rise and then fall as you exhale through your mouth.
- ◆ When you exhale, use **positive self-talk**. Tell yourself, "*I am relaxed and calm.*"
- ◆ After a few moments, your symptoms may not be as severe as they originally were. This is because you have lowered your anxiety level and are beginning to relax.
- ◆ Practice this style of breathing two to three times per day.
- ◆ Breathing properly can be one of the most important factors in managing the symptoms of anxiety.

It is important to try and stay calm and rational when you feel yourself becoming anxious. Panic attacks happen when your mind feels that a particular situation is or can be worse than it really is. Utilizing these techniques can be a start in calming yourself down to a more relaxed state of mind. Be patient with yourself and take small steps

Cognitive Restructuring

Once you have rated your level of anxiety, record these thoughts on paper or in a journal. This process will assist you in becoming aware of what triggers these reactions and how it makes you feel. Be sure to note the frequency and duration of these episodes.

WHAT CAN I DO?

When you begin feeling anxious, sit back and calmly go over the odds that your fears or predictions may actually happen. Ask yourself, is there any evidence for or against the reality of it actually taking place? Write all of these down if necessary, and use **positive self-talk** to help you grasp the situation more clearly, such as *what I fear will not happen, I CAN do this...*



Remember different forms of coping are available. What may work for you, may not work for someone else. Experiment and practice using the techniques that you feel comfortable with and seem to work the best at helping you manage your symptoms.

For additional information or for professional guidance, contact one of the following University Resources: the Counseling Center, McKinley Mental Health Unit, or McKinley Health Education Unit.