

holistic psychotherapy :: anxiety

Anxiety describes any feeling of worry or dread, usually about events that might potentially happen. Some anxiety about stressful events is normal. However, with some people, anxiety interferes with the ability to function. The essential characteristic of anxiety is excessive, uncontrollable worry about everyday things. This constant worry affects daily functioning and can cause physical symptoms. Anxiety can occur with other anxiety disorders, depressive disorders, or substance abuse. Anxiety is often difficult to diagnose because it lacks some of the dramatic symptoms, such as unprovoked Panic Attacks, that are seen with other anxiety disorders; for a diagnosis to be made, worry must be present more days than not for at least 6 months. The focus of anxiety worry can shift, usually focusing on issues like job, finances, health of both self and family; but it can also include more mundane issues such as, chores, car repairs and being late for appointments. The intensity, duration and frequency of the worry are disproportionate to the issue and interferes with the sufferer's performance of tasks and ability to concentrate.

Anxiety disorder can be chronic or acute. Acute anxiety disorder manifests itself in episodes commonly known as 'panic attacks'. A 'panic attack' is an instance in which the body's natural "fight or flight" reaction occurs at the wrong time. Chronic anxiety is a milder, more generalized form of this disorder. Many sufferers feel a vague sense of anxiety much of the time, but the intensity of the feeling does not reach the levels of those in an actual panic attack. They may feel chronically uneasy, especially in the presence of other people and tend to startle easily. Headaches and chronic fatigue are common among people with this form of the disorder.

People with anxiety disorder, especially those who experience acute attacks, often seek medical assistance in hospital emergency rooms only to be told that they are just suffering from stress and that everything will be fine with rest. In one study, up to 70 percent of the people who had panic attacks were found to have seen ten or more different physicians before being correctly diagnosed.

Reducing exposure to stressful situations can help decrease anxiety. In some cases, prayer or meditation, counseling, or group therapy can greatly facilitate this process.

signs and symptoms of anxiety

- Muscle tension
- Sweating
- Nausea
- Cold, clammy hand
- Difficulty swallowing
- Jumpiness
- Gastrointestinal discomfort or diarrhea
- Racing heart, rapid breathing
- Fatigue
- Insomnia
- Irritability
- Stomach problems
- Shortness of breath



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Sufferers tend to be irritable and complain about feeling on edge, are easily tired and have trouble sleeping. Some people who think they are anxious may actually be depressed. [This should be a link to the depression page.] Because of all these factors, it is important for people who are anxious to seek expert medical care. Natural therapies can be one part of the approach to helping relieve mild to moderate anxiety.

what you can do right now

Call a trusted friend or family member. Talking things over can diffuse anxiety.

Get adequate rest. Since many with anxiety disorder have trouble sleeping, taking naps or ingesting a natural sleep aid (such as valerian root, melatonin, or chamomile tea) can be very helpful.

Exercise. Exercise can improve symptoms of anxiety and depression.

Avoid caffeine, sugar, nicotine, and refined sugar.

what we do at cayenne wellness center and children's foundation

treatment

Traditionally anxiety has been treated, along with psychological counseling such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, with anti-anxiety agents such as Ativan and Xanax. Anti-depressants such as Prozac, Paxil and Zoloft are often prescribed to treat generalized anxiety and panic attacks. Today, more people are looking into options for all their health care, and emotional health is no exception. Many alternative treatments have become popular for treatment of anxiety. **With holistic psychotherapy**, the mind helps heal the body by becoming more aware of one's thoughts, belief patterns, and behaviors. Mindfulness based mind/body techniques have been well researched and documented to help reduce and manage depression and anxiety, as well as pain and fatigue and stress levels. These techniques also can help lower blood pressure, strengthen the immune and nervous systems, help one manage obsessive compulsive disorders, add/adhd, and other mental/emotional/physical disorders. We integrate mind/body awareness training that include mindfulness based prayer/meditation and stress reduction techniques along with cognitive behavioral therapy. We combine talk therapy, spiritual counseling, holistic lifestyle counseling, nutrition, diet, herbs and other alternative treatments to aid in providing balance with those suffering from anxiety.

nutrition :: diet :: herbs & supplements

nutrition.

recommendations. A healthy balanced diet is an important element in any plan to overcome anxiety and achieve wellness. That's because there are foods that promote calmness and mood stability, and by the same token, there are foods that stoke anxiety and stress. There are three dietary factors most responsible for stirring anxiety: caffeine, sugar, and eating foods to which you are allergic. Eating a diet rich in whole, natural foods is an important key to maintaining overall wellness and can help limit your propensity for anxiety. You want a diet that includes plenty of fresh, raw fruit and vegetables (these are more conducive to health than their cooked, frozen or canned counterparts). Whole foods include fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, unrefined cereals, beans, nuts (i.e., soybeans and soy products, brown rice, millet, and legumes ([see 3-4-4](#))). It's also important to eat a variety of foods so that you satisfy the full range of your body's needs. Your regular menu should include complex carbohydrates, such as vegetables and whole grains; fats, such as oils and nuts; and proteins, such as tofu and beans and rice. For a nutritional treatment plan to have maximum benefits, the diet should contain no simple sugars, carbonated soft drinks, caffeine (like coffee, black tea, cola, chocolate ...), tobacco, or alcohol. At Cayenne Wellness Center, you are immediately placed on the 3-4-4 nutritional method of eating program which encompasses over forty nutrients for optimum health.

- Include in the diet apricots, asparagus, avocados, bananas, broccoli, brown rice, dried fruits, figs, garlic, green leafy vegetables, legumes, raw nuts and seeds, soy products.
- Eat regularly. Studies show that people who eat three to four meals a day tend to control their weight successfully. This may be because they do not get excessively hungry and overeat or snack between meals. Studies also indicate that those who eat breakfast consume fewer daily calories.
- Water, water and more water. You should try to drink six to eight-ounce glasses of purified water per day.
- Limit your intake of animal protein. Concentrate on meals high in complex carbohydrates and vegetable protein.
- Avoid foods containing refined sugar or other simple carbohydrates.

- Keep a food diary to detect correlations between your attacks and the foods you eat. Food allergies and sensitivities may trigger panic or anxiety attacks.
- **All sources of caffeine should be avoided, including coffee, tea, chocolate, caffeinated sodas, and caffeine-containing medications. People with high levels of anxiety appear to be more susceptible to the actions of caffeine. (see prescription for nutritional healing)**
- Avoid the use of recreational drugs. Recreational drugs, such as marijuana and cocaine, can cause anxiety attacks.

supplements and herbs.

Certain supplements may offer a degree of relief from anxiety. These supplements include herbs, vitamins, amino acids, and hormones.

herbs. St John's wort can ease depression and restore emotional stability. Results in mood should be noticed in approximately two to four weeks. Valerian root is a herbal tranquilizer and has a good reputation for promoting sleep. Passionflower is a natural tranquilizer considered by many to be as effective as valerian. Skullcap and valerian root or passion flower and valerian root can be taken at bedtime to promote sleep and aid in preventing panic attacks at night. Kava (or kava kava) is a natural tranquilizer. Small doses produce a sense of well being, while large doses can produce lethargy, drowsiness, and reduced muscle tension.

essential supplements. Calcium and magnesium, Liquid Kyolic with B₁ and B₁₂ from Wakunaga, multivitamin and mineral complex with potassium and selenium, Vitamin B complex plus extra Vitamin B₁ and Vitamin B₆ and niacinamide, Vitamin C, Vitamin E, Zinc (see Prescription for Nutritional Healing for more information).

exercise:

exercise. Inactivity is a contributing factor in obesity, hypertension, depression, and yes, anxiety. When anxiety hits, your body goes into fight-or-flight mode. That means that your sympathetic nervous system is activated and a surge of adrenaline is released. The message your body gets is 'get ready to move fast!' Remaining inactive in the face of this state of activation usually intensifies your symptoms¹.

Exercise is a natural outlet for anxiety. When you become physically active the minute your anxiety symptoms begin, you satisfy your body's needs to act and tell your mind that the danger has passed and it can turn off the alarm signals.

¹ Bourne, Edmund J., Brownstein, Arlen, and Garano, Lorna. 2004. *Natural Relief for Anxiety*. New Harbinger Publications, Inc.

Exercise counters several of the physiological factors that underlie anxiety such as: improved circulation, improved digestion and utilization of food, improved elimination (from skin, lungs, and bowels) and decreased blood pressure. Exercise results in several psychological benefits that may help reduce anxiety such as reduced insomnia, improved concentration and memory, reduced depression, increased self esteem and greater sense of control over stress and anxiety.

So, get regular exercise. Any type of exercise will work - a brisk walk, bicycle riding, swimming, roller skating or whatever fits your individual lifestyle. After a few weeks of regular exercise, most people notice an improvement in anxiety symptoms (see the depression section for more information on exercise).

relaxation and stress reduction techniques

get adequate rest.

relaxation techniques.

deep relaxation

progressive muscle relaxation

passive muscle relaxation

abdominal breathing

chest/calming breathing

guided visualization

To help manage an acute attack, use breathing techniques; for example:

- Inhale slowly through the nose to a count of two (one thousand one, one thousand two)
- Exhale from the mouth slowly to a count of four (or double the breath you inhaled - for instance, if you inhaled three, exhale six)
- Repeat this sequence until the attack subsides

group involvement:

Being in a group of others who are also struggling can help a person feel less alone and give them more compassion for their own situation.

laugh therapy:

The benefits of laughter can change your life. Why laugh? And how will it help you? Laughing ...

- strengthens your immune system
- makes your cheeks sore
- enhances your cardiovascular flexibility
- makes you think more clearly
- increases your intellectual performance and information retention
- “pops”you out of emotional ruts
- replenishes your creative juices
- develop abdominal muscles of steel
- creates perspective and reminds you of the bigger picture
- makes you wonder why you wasted all those years being serious
- draws you into experiencing the present

Dr. Annette Goodheart wrote a book on this very subject entitled '[Laughter Therapy](#)'. Part 1 of the book contains the theory of laughter, sprinkled generously with real life stories; Part 2 details 25 ways to help yourself laugh.

embracing spirituality:

When you deepen your spiritual awareness, you come to appreciate the inherent uniqueness of your purpose for being here on earth. The gravity of your daily worries and fears diminishes when seen through a wider spiritual lens. Anxiety and the what-if scenarios that often drive it can seem inconsequential after you've developed a stronger spiritual grounding.