

Student Health Centre


Coping with Anxiety



Introduction

Anxiety and worry are human emotions that we all feel at times. However, sometimes anxiety can become excessive and unhealthy, for example, when it effects your daily life, in as far as you..... *Can't do regular activities as well as you usually do....Worry excessively without apparent reason.....Occasionally become immobilised with fear.....Can't cope with fear and know that it is irrational.....Can't get the anxiety symptoms to go away.*


Types of Anxiety



Generalised Anxiety Disorder
Recurrent fear, worries or persistent sense of something bad happening. The reason for the intense feelings may be hard to identify.

Panic Disorder
Sudden, intense, unprovoked feelings of terror or dread which often lead to concern about when another attack will occur.

Phobias
Intense fears about certain objects or situations. Specific phobias involve things such as certain animals or flying in airplanes. Social phobia is fear of social settings or public places, e.g. fear of public speaking.



Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder
Persistent, uncontrollable and unwanted feelings or thoughts and routines in which individual engage to try to prevent or rid themselves of these thoughts. Examples include excessive hand washing or house cleaning for fear of germs or excessively checking something for errors.

Post –traumatic Stress Disorder
An individual who experienced severe physical or emotional trauma such as natural disaster, an accident, a crime, etc.....may experience anxious thoughts, feelings and behaviours when reminders of the traumatic event are encountered.

Coping with Anxiety

Do not immediately consider complete relief as the only possible solution. Much anxiety is completely survivable and may even help you.

Remember too, when trying to cope with anxiety it is necessary to identify what sort of worry you have. If it takes a particular form you need to seek a treatment which is appropriate to it. Panic attacks, for example, will not respond to techniques and strategies aimed at reducing and dealing with general worry. Nor will a particular phobia give way to general advice about keeping relaxed. Specific approaches designed to meet the particular anxiety are more helpful. However, there are a number of general anxiety management strategies and techniques from which you may want to pick and choose from:

Anxiety Management Strategies

Physical Level

Practice deep breathing exercises
Use relaxation strategies, e.g. meditation, yoga, deep muscle relaxation
Exercise regularly
Exclude excess caffeine, sugar, nicotine, salt and alcohol from your diet.

Emotional Level

Don't ignore your feelings
Identify your feelings
Express your feelings

Mental Level

What you say to yourself about a situation determines your feelings and behaviours in that situation.
Managing anxiety often involves changing the messages you give to yourself to be more positive.

Do your thoughts;

include excessive 'what if?' questions in which you imagine the worst possible outcomes before facing the situation?
Judge and evaluate you in very critical ways?
Say you are supposed to be perfect, that what you do is not good enough?
Say you cannot change the situation and you are helpless to have any impact?
Show worry about what others think of you or how they respond?

Behavioural Level

A panic attack can be very frightening when it occurs. You can learn to anticipate them and learn how to respond to them when they occur:
Keep a perspective that it is just a reaction of your body and not a serious health problem
Learn how to talk gently and calmly to yourself by using more helpful self-talk
Use deep breathing exercises in combination with positive self-talk

Interpersonal Level

Assertiveness in your interactions with others will help to decrease feelings of helplessness and anxiety.
Assert yourself, e.g. ask for what you want and stand up for yourself
Say 'no' to some things you do not want to do

Medical Level

An assessment by your GP can help decide if medication would be helpful for you.

Where to find Help

Student Counselling Service
Room 10C. Left after the yellow stairs on the ground floor and left again.
Phone: 4042635 from outside / E-mail: counselling@itt dublin.ie

Some Reading

There is a wealth of literature on anxiety in most large book shops.
Below are some books which are available in the Institute Library.

Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway- Susan Jeffers

How to Stop Worrying- Dale Carnegie

Hidden Fears- Helen Franks

Panic Attacks- Sue Breton

Panic Attacks- Christine Ingham

More Help for your Nerves- Claire Weekes

Anxiety Phobias- Elaine Sheehan

Banish Anxiety- Kenneth Hamblly