



# How lifestyle changes can help ease anxiety

Lifestyle changes are not easy for anyone to make. They can be even harder when you are dealing with anxiety, breaking bad habits or adding new activities to your daily routine. But your efforts may be well worth it.

## Getting started

- **Start slowly.** Don't try to change too much at once. Make just one change to start.
- **Set realistic goals** that will help you improve, not burden you.
- **Pick a lifestyle change that appeals to you.** You have a better chance of sticking with a plan if you enjoy it.
- **Keep at it!** You may not get the results you want right away. But keep at it. The activities you choose will become easier and more pleasant. Over time, this will improve your mood and how you function.

## Try these lifestyle changes

Here are some lifestyle tips that may add to your success in coping with anxiety:

- **Limit caffeine.** Coffee and sodas can have a stimulating effect on the body and may increase worry and fear.
- **Avoid cigarettes.** People tend to smoke more when they are distressed, anxious, and worried. But it only masks anxious feelings temporarily. It does not address the root cause of your problems and may lead to medical illnesses.
- **Exercise.** Regular exercise helps people of all ages feel more relaxed and accepting of situations they cannot change. Choosing an activity you enjoy increases the chances of sticking with the exercise routine.
- **Focus on good nutrition.** A balanced diet is vital for maintaining good emotional and physical health.
- **Drink alcoholic beverages in moderation.** Regular, heavy use of alcohol may help with anxious feelings for a short period of time. It does not address what's causing your problems. It may contribute to poor health. In addition, drinking and driving often leads to accidents.
- **Use care when taking medications.** Some over-the-counter drugs may provide temporary relief from worry. But they do not solve the real problems and tensions. See your doctor before you take these drugs. If you take prescription medication to manage worry and anxiety, take it as prescribed. Talk to your doctor if you find yourself needing more medication to get the same effect.
- **Get preventive health care.** Regular check-ups can prevent disease. By catching problems early, they can be addressed before they get worse.
- **Spend time with friends and family.** People who give and receive support regularly tend to have fewer health problems and better coping skills.

- **Develop a daily routine.** Try to wake up, eat, go to sleep and do other usual tasks at the same time every day. This can help you stay in control of your life.
- **Pace yourself.** Do not plan too many tasks in one day.

### Are you ready for bigger lifestyle changes?

Here are some more tips to help you make successful lifestyle changes:

- **Set realistic goals.** When you set a goal, make sure it is within reach. Be mindful of your finances, schedule and interests so that you are realistic.
- **Be specific—put it in writing.** Be as exact as possible. People who set definite goals are more likely to succeed. Write down what you want to achieve. Post it in a place where you will see it every day.
- **Develop an action plan.** Create a timeline of steps with deadlines toward your goals. Then cross them off as you go. As your list gets smaller, it may give you the boost you need to keep going.
- **Believe in yourself.** Stay positive about your progress. Share your goals with a friend. Ask your friend to help you keep your spirits up.
- **Reward yourself.** Be proud of your efforts. Reaching a goal takes hard work.
- **Develop a plan to address roadblocks.** It is not uncommon to slip into old patterns. Admit it when you feel discouraged. Then move on with your healthy habits as soon as possible. Your hard work will pay off!

### My goal and how I'm going to get there

Filling out this form can help you set your goals and track your progress. Complete as many copies as you have goals and refer to them often.

**My goal:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

**Why is this important to me?** \_\_\_\_\_

Actions I will take to achieve my goal	Action #1	Action #2
What action(s) will I take?		
When will I do it (time of day)?		
For how long?		
How often?		

### Before I start my goal:

How important is this to me? <i>on a scale from 1(not at all) to 10 (very)</i>	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
How confident am I that I will succeed? <i>on a scale from 1(not at all) to 10 (very)</i>	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Things that might get in the way:		
How will I address things that get in the way?		
Information that will help me succeed:		
Support and resources that will help me succeed:		
How ready am I? <i>on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 10 (very)</i>	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

### Getting started on my goal

Date I will start working toward my goal:	Date: ____/____/____
Date I will check my progress toward my goal:	Date: ____/____/____
Date I will check my progress toward my goal:	Date: ____/____/____
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