

ANXIETY 101:

A Quick Guide to Learning
More About Anxiety



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Introduction

This e-book is a starting point in learning more about anxiety. We hear the term “anxiety” being thrown around everywhere these days....but are we truly using the word correctly?

This e-book is for people who are struggling with anxiety, for people who would just like to gain more understanding of what it is, or for people wanting to support loved ones who may be struggling with anxiety.

Disclaimer: This e-book is not a diagnosing tool or substitution for therapy. This is a guide to provide information and education on anxiety. Please refer to your medical doctor and/or therapist for further information and diagnosing

Inside the Mind of an Anxious Brain



"I can tell my anxiety annoys you. I can see it on your face and in your body language. Please know I don't want to feel like this either and I am not doing this on purpose. Believe me, I am embarrassed. Please, please be patient with me. This is a daily thing for me. It's hard. I'm exhausted. I am trying. I really am."

What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is a natural response to stress. Everyone has experienced anxiety in their life, one time or another. However, for some people this response can turn into a pattern in which many things become stressful. Things that would be viewed as a normal, everyday occurrence, for others can be debilitating for someone struggling with anxiety.

Anxiety is worried thoughts and feelings of tension. These thoughts can be seen as rational or irrational. Many people that struggle with everyday anxiety know that their thoughts are irrational, however, this alone doesn't help them cope with the situation.

Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)

In order to be diagnosed with anxiety by a professional, a person has to meet a certain criteria. If someone says they've been diagnosed with anxiety, they are most often referring to the technical term in the DSM (Diagnostic Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders) of Generalized Anxiety Disorder. The DSM lists the following signs and symptoms of GAD:

- Excessive anxiety and worry occurring more days than not for at least 6 months, about a number of events or activities
- The person finds it difficult to control the worry
- Restlessness or feeling keyed up or on edge
- Easily fatigued
- Difficult concentrating or mind going blank
- Irritability
- Muscle tension
- Sleep disturbance (difficulty falling or staying asleep, or restless, unsatisfying asleep)

Physical Symptoms

Anxiety is fear. When we fear something, whether it's rational or irrational, our body reacts in a physical way.



High-Functioning Anxiety (HFA)

Once someone is diagnosed with GAD, they may notice other symptoms, however, it may be hard to notice or put into words. This is because sometimes High-Functioning Anxiety can be seen as a “good” thing. For example, someone with HFA can be viewed as: outgoing, friendly, organized, loyal, calm, punctual, driven, helpful, detail-oriented, etc. Underneath those traits, there may be lots more going on for that person, that is just what is seen by others. So, let’s take a look at some common traits of High-Functioning Anxiety and what each looks and/or sounds like.

Common Symptoms of HFA:

- perfectionism
- hard to take breaks
- fear of failure
- extremely early for everything
- feel the need to always be ready
- overthinking/overanalyzing
- fear of disappointing others
- needing lots of praise from others
- procrastination
- tendency to overshare
- feeling like an imposter
- negative self-talk
- repetitive habits
- thinking worse case scenario

Triggers

What is a trigger?

A trigger is something that causes a person to have a strong emotional reaction. In many cases, it is something that brings on, worsens, or intensifies a symptom (in this case, anxiety).

Why is it important to know your triggers?

It can be helpful to pinpoint your anxiety triggers. Having the awareness of your triggers, you can try to do things to help decrease the level of anxiety you experience when you're in these situations. This could be using coping skills after encountering triggers, asking for support from someone during these moments, or when possible, avoiding those triggers all together.

Triggers

(cont'd)

Common triggers:

large crowds	heights
confrontation	meeting new people
acceptance	roller coasters
trauma	maintaining conversation
poor performance	finances
homelife	fear of being alone
small spaces	fear of not being accepted
forgetting	sleep
initiating conversation	thoughts of the future
family issues	animals
work	change
abuse	trying new things
fear of failure	loud noises
mistakes	fear of dying
thinking about the past	illness

Coping Skills

There are SO many coping skills, these are just a few. It is important to have several coping skills on-hand to utilize when needed. If we use just one or two, oftentimes we use them so much they stop working. Also, not every coping skill works for every situation, or for every person. It is important to try new ones and add more to your coping skills toolbox.

Breathing

Because anxiety affects our breathing patterns, controlling our breathing is one of the most effective and underrated coping skills we can utilize for anxiety. There are several different breathing techniques out there to help control your breathing. Find the one that best fits you.

Challenging Anxious Thoughts

What is the worst possible outcome? What is the best possible outcome? What is the most likely outcome? What evidence supports my anxious thoughts? Are there other ways I can think about this situation or myself?

Mindfulness

Anxiety is making us experience the future over and over. Practicing being in the here and now, in the present moment will help combat some of those anxious/fearful thoughts.

Coping Skills

(cont'd)

Journaling

Writing down your wondering, intrusive, rapid thoughts can help get them out of your head. This can help us see them on paper, and sometimes make it seem less scary.

Medication

There are several medications that help alleviate some anxiety symptoms. Some medications are designed to be taken everyday and others are designed to work on an "as needed" basis. Medications are not a substitute for therapy. A mental illness (like anxiety) is like standing in a pitch black dark room where you can't see anything at all. Medication makes a small light turn on in the corner of the room so you can start to see things. The coping skills you do and the work you do in therapy helps you walk toward that light and see even more. If you would like further information about your options regarding anxiety medications, contact your doctor.

Coping Skills

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Additional Coping Skills:

- Meditation
- Exercise
- Facing your fears
- Unplugging from social media
- Go in nature
- Take time for yourself
- Listening to your favorite upbeat music
- Watch something funny on tv
- Use calming scents (lavender, eucalyptus, etc.)
- Avoid triggers and stay away from things that cause more anxiety for you
- Crossword puzzles, word search, sudoku
- Long hot bath or shower
- Ask for help and support from someone you trust
- THERAPY!!

Affirmations for Anxiety

I trust my intuition.

I believe in myself and my abilities.

I've gotten through this before; I can get through it again.

I have the ability to cope.

I release the things that do not serve me.

I have everything I need to overcome this challenge.

I am stronger than my insecurities.

I can solve any problem that comes my way.

I am allowed to ask for help.

I am taking steps to overcome my anxiety.

This situation and these feelings are temporary.

I deserve to heal and feel better.

My voice is powerful and my opinion matters.



Note from the Author:

My goal for this e-book is to explain common questions many people have about anxiety. We hear the word anxiety so often now, however, it is often misused or people are afraid to ask what it really means. I hope this e-book answered a lot of the questions you may have had about anxiety, whether you're the one struggling with it or know someone who is.

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Contact me if you have any questions or would like to make an appointment.



www.DiesiCounseling.com

