

# How to Deal with Anxiety: A Guide from Crisis Text Line

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## What is Anxiety?

People can feel anxious about a lot of things: the first day of school, a job interview, a first date. Anxiety is that pang of “what if” that makes your heart race and your palms sweaty. There’s a difference between healthy anxiety and a paralyzing fear about the future.

If you’re experiencing anxiety, know that you’re not alone.

## Symptoms:

It’s different for everyone. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, some symptoms can include:

- Feeling restless, wound-up, or on-edge
- Hyperactivity
- Trouble sleeping
- Fatigue
- Difficulty concentrating
- Irritability
- Muscle tension
- Difficulty controlling feelings of worry

## Healthy Coping Mechanisms:

If you’re feeling anxious, even thinking through the steps for how to tackle it could feel overwhelming. You shouldn’t have to summit that mountain alone. So, here are some steps to get you started:

- Reach out for help.

- Blow off some steam. Exercise is important for both your physical and mental health. If your thoughts are racing and you're feeling overwhelmed, try lacing up your shoes and going for a walk, tapping it back in a spin class, or getting into flow at yoga.
- Get some Zzzzs. Set yourself up to get your solid 6-8 hours every night by finding a routine that works for you.
- Talk to a pro. Managing your mental health is part of managing your health. Finding the right doctor could help you hone in on the thoughts and situations that lead to your anxiety.

## Types:

People are all different—and so is anxiety. According to the [American Psychiatric Association](#), the most common anxiety disorders are:

- Generalized Anxiety Disorder: excessive worry that is disproportionate to normal anxiousness around upcoming life events (such as work or school)
- Social Anxiety Disorder: intense fear of social interactions, making it hard to go out, make friends, or interact with others
- Panic Disorder: recurrent panic attacks that cause someone to change their behavior in order to avoid having them. Panic attacks are not your regular grade freak out; they're an intense physical reaction to fear often causing an accelerated heart rate, sweating, and difficulty breathing.
- Separation Anxiety Disorder: fear of being separated from someone usually because of worry that something may happen to them while they're away
- Specific Phobias: intense fear about a specific thing or situation (ex. spiders, heights, flying)

## Anxiety and Depression:

Sometimes people experience anxiety along with other mental health disorders. Many people also experience depression. And, while people may experience both disorders, it's important to note that they have different symptoms and causes.

## Anxiety and Panic:

Think of anxiety and panic as cousins: they're linked, though not always one and the same. It's common to have panic attacks as a fear response with anxiety disorders. It's also possible

to have an occasional panic attack without having a disorder. Panic attacks can be scary—they often feel like a heart attack. The good news? They don't do any long-term damage to your body. That doesn't mean they aren't a big deal. (Repeat, they actually feel like you are having a heart attack.)

## **Anxiety and Stress:**

Stress is a totally normal and expected response to situations and changes in our lives. Anxiety can also manifest as a response to stress. The trick is identifying when healthy levels of stress transition to disproportionate levels of anxiety around particular situations or events.

## **Causes:**

Simply put, no one thing causes anxiety. However, there are a few things that can increase your risk:

- **Genetics.** Researchers have found that people who develop anxiety disorders before the age of 20 likely also have a relative who lives with anxiety.
- **Brain Chemistry.** Science shows that stress can change the chemical balance in the brain. So it is no surprise that this chemical change can affect your mood.
- **Personality.** For some people, their personality can make them predisposed to certain anxiety disorders.
- **Life Events.** Traumatic events can change our lives...they can also change our brains. Sometimes, anxiety can manifest around large or challenging life changes.

## **Treatment and Prevention:**

Anxiety can feel overwhelming. It's also highly treatable. Some common treatments include:

- **Deep Breaths.** Focus on your breathing to calm and center yourself.
- **Stress Less.** Stress management techniques such as exercise, meditation, and mindfulness can help manage stress.
- **Get some shut-eye.** Maintaining a regular sleep schedule can regulate your mood and stress.
- **Talk to a professional.** A therapist may be able to help you manage triggers and symptoms. Therapists and doctors may also prescribe medication to help manage your mental health.
- **It's always okay to ask for help.** In fact, asking for help is brave. Looking to get started? Try talking to your doctor to learn more about how you are feeling and ways to take care of your mental health.