

Perspectives

5 Actions to Alleviate Anxiety Quickly

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Is your anxiety starting to creep in? Center yourself now with these de-stressing strategies.

1. Control your breathing.

When you find your tension rising, pause and concentrate only on breathing in and out, beginning and ending, moment to moment.

Practice the box breathing technique: Inhale through your nose gently for four counts, hold your breath for four counts, exhale fully through pursed lips for four counts, hold for four counts, and repeat the cycle with another inhale.

2. Try progressive muscle relaxation.

When you're anxious or stressed, it can feel like every muscle in your body is tense. The progressive muscle relaxation exercise can help you calm down and center yourself.

To do this, lie down on the floor with your arms out by your side. Be sure your hands aren't clenched into fists and uncross your ankles. Start at your toes and tell yourself to release them. Slowly move up your body, releasing each part of your body until you get to your head. [Get started with this Progressive Muscle Relaxation exercise.](#)

3. Practice mindfulness meditation. (It's easier than you think!)

Focus specifically on being aware of your thoughts, feelings, and/or physical sensations with openness and curiosity. Nonjudgmentally notice your emotions and make space for them.

A regular meditation practice, which can be as simple as sitting in a comfortable chair and focusing on your breath, can both help you cope with anxiety in the moment and arm you for future stressors. [View the Perspectives Mindfulness Video Series](#)

4. Move your body.

Aerobic exercise—in whatever form works for you—helps to reduce the biological response to stress. Improved blood circulation and feel-good endorphins can quickly ease your anxiety symptoms.

The exercise doesn't need to be strenuous; just going for a short walk can be all it takes to clear your head and calm your body. And, if you can get out in nature, even better!

5. Challenge your thoughts.

Anxiety can include having irrational thoughts that are often the “worst-case scenario.” When you experience one of these thoughts, stop and ask yourself the following questions:

- Is this likely to happen?
- Is this a rational thought?
- What's the worst that can happen and can I handle that?

After you go through the questions, try to reframe your thinking. Consider what you could do to change your circumstances next time. Write down your thoughts for further reflection.

Bonus Tip – LOL 😊

Sometimes laughter really is the best medicine. Research has found that laughing provides therapeutic benefits and can help relieve stress and improve mood. Read something comical or watch a funny video clip for an instant boost.

Long-term stress relief and management involve developing healthy everyday habits and coping techniques.

