

# THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT ANXIETY

## WHAT IS ANXIETY?

Anxiety refers to the feelings of worry and nervousness that we all feel from time to time. It's a normal part of our body's alarm system. Our bodies have three main ways to cope with threat: fight, flight or freeze. If you come across something dangerous your choices are to run (that's flight) or to fight whatever the danger is. The freeze reaction happens when we're not sure what to do; our bodies freeze while we sort out our options. Some level of anxiety is good. It focuses our attention and motivates us to put effort into what we're doing.

There are many different ways anxiety is experienced.

- A fear of embarrassing yourself in public or worry that someone will judge you negatively.
- General ongoing worry and a constant feeling of uneasiness and difficulty relaxing.
- Ongoing thoughts and feelings associated with a traumatic event.
- Persistent thoughts that get replayed over and over again.
- Engaging in repetitive behaviours (for example counting or washing hands many times) that seems to help stop the anxiety.
- Sudden feelings of terror that may include a fast heartbeat, shortness of breath, dizziness and fear of having a heart attack or stroke.

Anxiety experiences can range from a little anxiety, which doesn't interfere with daily activities, to a lot of anxiety, which can be overwhelming and can make daily activities feel nearly impossible. Anxiety disorders may be diagnosed when symptoms (thoughts, feelings, behaviours and physical symptoms) make it very difficult to carry on in our day-to-day activities.

## HOW CAN I HELP SOMEONE WITH ANXIETY?

- **Be open and welcoming:** tell them you are there to support them.
- **Validate their experience:** acknowledge that their anxiety must be difficult to handle; don't tell them their anxiety is stupid or unfounded.
- **Point them to professional help:** encourage them to visit their physician to talk about options for support.
- **Challenge their thoughts:** ask them if there are other ways to view a situation. You can challenge their thinking while still validating their anxiety. For example, if they say 'I'm definitely going to fail this exam', you can acknowledge that worrying about an exam is normal, but you can also reassure them that they've studied hard and have done well on exams in the past.
- **Encourage them to face their fears:** they may avoid certain situations as a way of not feeling anxious about them. Tell them you believe they can overcome their fears by facing them head-on, and offer to support them while they do so.
- **Celebrate their successes:** when a friend takes a step towards confronting their fears and congratulate them. Help them feel proud of themselves for addressing the issue.

EVERYONE FEELS ANXIOUS AT TIMES, BUT TOO MUCH ANXIETY CAN GET IN THE WAY OF DAILY LIFE. ANXIETY CAN BECOME A PROBLEM WHEN IT DOESN'T GO AWAY, GETS WORSE AND/OR MAKES IT HARD FOR YOU TO DO THE THINGS YOU WANT TO DO.



# TIPS FOR MANAGING ANXIETY

## LET YOUR MUSCLES WORK

Being physically active offers time away from worries and makes us focus on what we're doing.



## DON'T FORGET THE BASICS

Get enough sleep, eat well and get active.



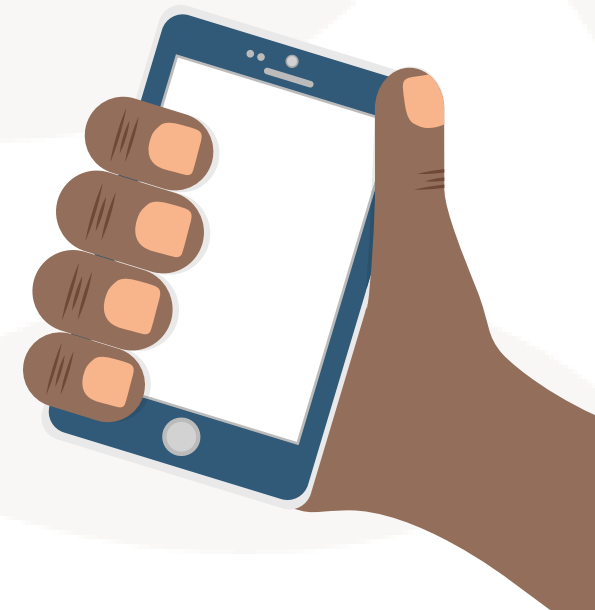
## TALK TO SOMEONE YOU TRUST

This could be a friend, family member, teacher, or someone else you trust. It can be helpful to talk through what's going on for you.



## TRACK YOUR ANXIETY

Make a note or use a mobile app to track how you are feeling and why you might be feeling that way. Learning patterns of thinking and responding can help prevent anxiety from building.



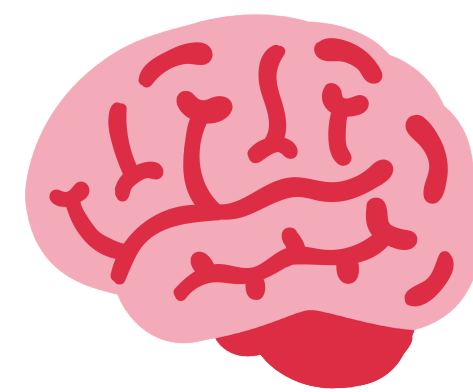
## RELAX YOUR MIND AND BODY

It's hard to relax when you're feeling anxious! While relaxation won't instantly make your anxiety go away, there are tools that can help you reduce the anxious feelings.



## CHANGE YOUR VIEW TOWARDS ANXIETY

Work on developing more helpful ways of thinking and identify active steps that will help you take charge of your anxiety.



## GET SUPPORT

There are times when we have challenges when it can be helpful to get support from someone. Others can offer a different perspective, try to answer questions and help you find resources, online or in your community.