

Is it More than
**Occasional
Anxiety?**



Approximately
8.9% of Adults
have had symptoms of an
Anxiety Disorder
in the U.S.

** National Institutes of Health*

3.9% of the
Worlds Population

** World Health Organization*

Symptoms of Anxiety



Emotional Symptoms

Fear, Sense of Impending Danger, Irritability, and Anger

Cognitive Symptoms

Excessive Worrying, Negative Thinking, Catastrophizing, Intrusive Thoughts, Trouble Concentrating, Impaired Memory, and Having the Urge to Avoid Things that Trigger the Anxiety

Physical Symptoms

Restlessness, Difficulty Relaxing, Feeling Keyed Up and on Edge, Muscle Tension, Trouble Sleeping, Changes in Appetite, Increased Heart Rate, Rapid Breathing, Sweating, Trembling, Digestive Issues, Headaches, Dizziness, Dry Mouth, Nausea, and Easily Fatigued

Ordinary (Situational) Anxiety

Occasional anxiety is an ordinary part of life. If you're facing a problem at school/work, meeting new people, or making an important decision, there are benefits to having some anxiety: it can help you better prepare for the event. In fact, it is a necessary part of your daily functioning as a stress response and to alert you of possible uncertainty ahead. From an evolutionary perspective, having this adaptive functioning of anxiety is vital for survival. If we were in the wild and encountered an angry bear, our fear gets triggered and automatically activates our fight-or-flight response without us having to consciously do so. This enables us the best chance for survival. For many of us, the fear response will typically dissipate shortly after the dangerous (perceived or real) event passes.



Disordered Anxiety

Anxiety disorders are a group of mental illnesses that result in persistent overpowering fear and anxiety that negatively impact functioning in one or more major life domains such as work, school, relationships, and day-to-day activities.

Generalized Anxiety Disorder



Chronic anxiety with elevated worry and tension despite having no clear trigger. The worries often focus on everyday concerns such as driving, job responsibilities, health issues, family, upcoming appointments, etc. There's marked difficulty in controlling the worrying and it occurs more days than not.

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder



Recurrent unwanted thoughts (obsessions) and repetitive behaviors (compulsions). These compulsions are attempts to prevent or reduce the occurrence of distressing obsessions. Examples of obsessions can center around themes of contamination, perfectionism, sex/sexual acts, fear of harm, relationships, forbidden thoughts, and moral/religious concerns. Examples of compulsions or "rituals" may look like checking, cleaning, counting, repeating, and mental review.

Panic Disorder



Recurrent panic attacks resulting in physical and psychological distress. Typically, a fear of having future panic attacks induces increased anxiety and avoidance of potential triggers. Symptoms of a panic attack may include heart palpitations, sweating shortness of breath, chest pain, dizziness, lightheadedness, trembling or shaking, feeling of choking, hot flashes or chills, fear of losing control, and feeling detached/dissociated. Many people who experience a panic attack may feel as if they are having a heart attack or other life threatening condition because the symptoms are so severe.

Agoraphobia



Fear of being in situations or places where escape may be difficult or embarrassing. The fear results in significant symptoms of anxiety and avoidance of potential triggers such as being in enclosed places, being in crowds, using public transportation, and being outside of the home. Agoraphobia may or may not accompany panic attacks.

Social Phobia



Fear of being in social situations that may elicit embarrassment, rejection, judgment, and humiliation. Individuals with social phobia may avoid, or have great emotional distress, when engaged in public speaking, meeting new people, and eating/drinking in public.

Other Specific Phobia



Persistent and irrational fear of a specific object or situation that poses minimal to no danger. The anxiety can be so intense that people may even avoid thinking about the feared object/situation. Not all phobias can affect functioning but for some it can be debilitating. People experiencing specific phobias usually have an awareness that the fear is unreasonable but they still feel helpless to it.



Tips for Managing Anxiety



Cognitive Strategies



Practice Being in the Present Moment

Anxiety is a future oriented state of mind. When you notice yourself worrying, kindly bring your awareness back to the present moment and ask yourself: Am I safe right now? Is there something I need to do (or can do)? If not, set a later time to check in and attend to those thoughts/worries.

Fact-Check Your Thoughts

Are my thoughts true/valid? If so, are they helpful? Sometimes with disordered anxiety, it can feel like the thoughts ARE true and helpful. However, it may not always be the case. Consider asking yourself this: is there a possibility that my thoughts are not true? And if so, can I entertain this thought for just a moment? And then another moment longer? Weighing the possibility of both outcomes will reduce the power of anxious thoughts over time. Remember: not all thoughts are facts.

Overthinking ≠ Helpful Thinking

Sometimes overthinking can feel like useful thinking or that thinking your way out of an anxious feeling is necessary. But oftentimes overthinking can just be your rational mind arguing with your body's natural threat response. It's ok to divert your attention externally so that this threat response turns off. Stand up, take a sip of water, or walk to another room to interrupt the cycle of overthinking.

High Alert Does Not Mean Safety

Anxiety is designed to remind you to be on high alert 24/7 "just in case." As a result you may end up scanning and anticipating for, or ruminating, on anxiety symptoms as self-relief techniques. Unfortunately, these results are only short term. It's ok to let go of the need to scan and watch for these symptoms. You are safe.

Fearing Fear Itself

Naturally, we want to avoid distressing feelings, thoughts, or triggers. However, the more you work towards avoiding anxiety the more it becomes reinforced that it is scary or dangerous. Lean into the feelings of anxiety. While it may feel life threatening or unbearable in the moment, anxious thoughts, feelings, or physical sensations are just that. They are thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations and cannot hurt you.

Tips for Managing Anxiety



Breaking Bad Habits

Sleep Hygiene

Are you getting enough sleep? Just like any other part of self-care, sleep hygiene can be practiced and developed so that we give ourselves the best opportunity to sleep well. Chronic sleep deprivation can lead to increased negative thinking and worrying. Try to set a routine so that you allow yourself time to transition into your sleep space at night. Try to wake up at the same time every day. Limit clock watching as this triggers your brain to stay awake. Limit alcohol, caffeine, smoking, and excessive exercise at least a few hours before bed as these substances and activities can be too stimulating for sleep.

Eating Well and Eating Regularly

Does stress cause you to overeat or undereat? Notice how your appetite/diet changes when you're under stress. Try eating foods that nourish your body and make you feel good in the long run. And don't forget to drink plenty of water.

Caffeine

Are you on your 5th cup of coffee? High levels of caffeine can increase nervousness and anxiety symptoms. While caffeine itself cannot lead to an anxiety disorder, it can mimic certain symptoms of anxiety which may result in additional emotional distress.

Social Media

Excessive use of social media can increase feelings of inadequacy, FOMO (fear of missing out), dissatisfaction, and loneliness. Try taking a social media detox and limit your use for a period of time. Remember, these apps are designed to draw you in and reinforce your attention. Create boundaries on when and for how long you engage on social media.

Be With Nature

Fine opportunities to get some "green" therapy and connect with nature. It can be as simple as taking a stroll through the park or pausing underneath a tree. Research has shown that even listening to nature sounds can boost your mood and reduce anxious feelings.





Breaking Bad Habits

Grounding Activities

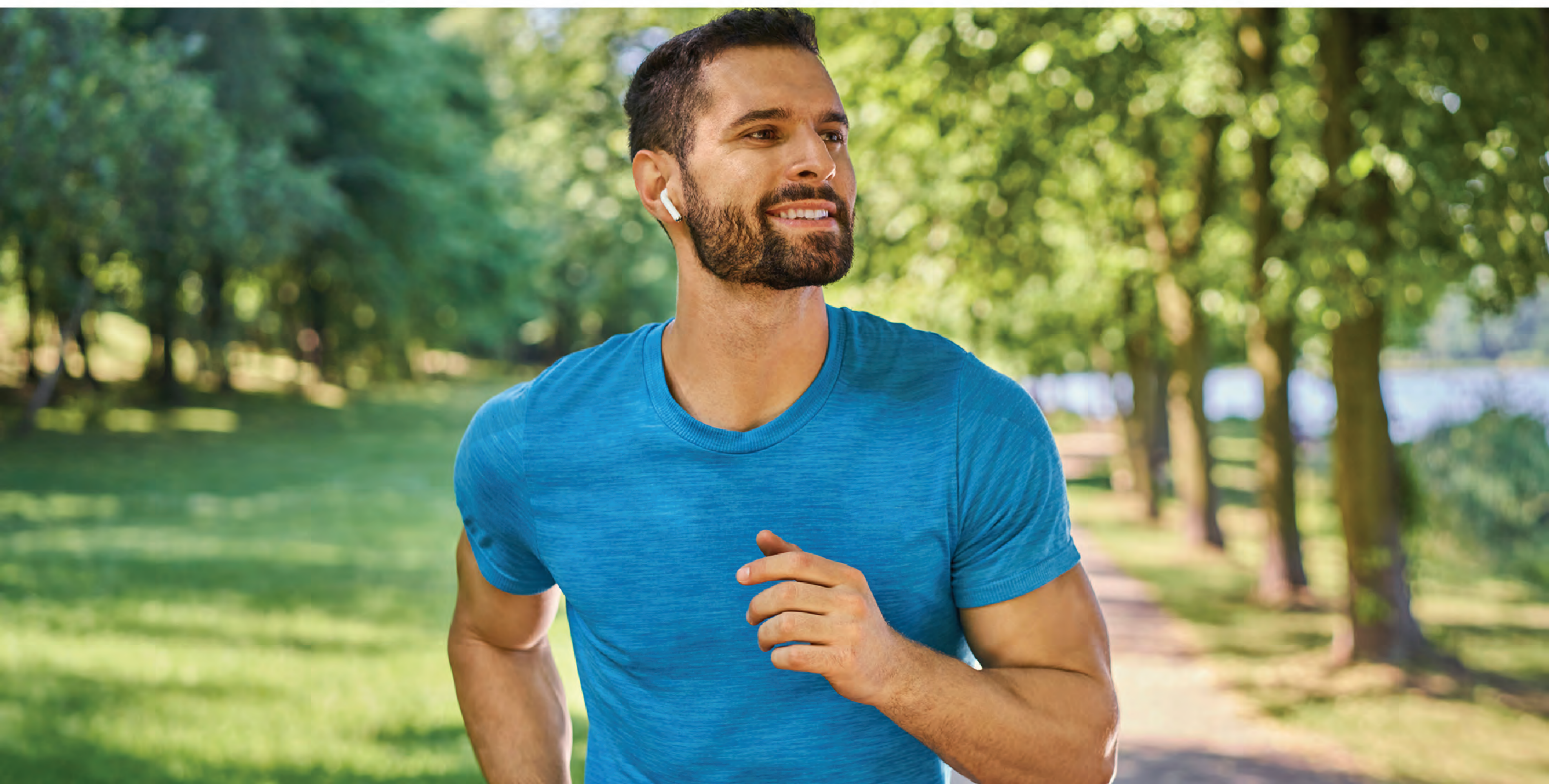
Find activities that help you feel grounded. This does not mean having quiet or down time such as sitting to meditate or forcing yourself to feel relaxed in order to wind down. Relaxation can look like going for a gentle walk, gardening, reading a book, cooking a simple meal, or spending time with pets. It is ok to do things you normally would do, even in the midst of ordinary or disordered anxiety. You do not have to wait until the anxious feelings are gone in order to engage in activities you enjoy or need to do.

Exercise to Relax

Regular physical activity has shown to greatly improve psychological well being and health. Sometimes having anxiety can make you feel fatigued and being inactive feels like the only thing you can do. However, being on chronic high alert and running through “what-if” scenarios can result in high levels of stress hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol in your body. Exercise has been shown to reduce anxiety and the spiral of stress response on the body.

Space for Transitions

In the midst of our hustle and bustle, it is easy to merge from one activity to another without a clear beginning and end. Sometimes, the mind and subsequent feelings can have trouble catching up with our bodies. This can add to existing stress and anxiety. If you can, try to allow some space in between all the “doing”, even for a couple of minutes to truly show up for the present moment. This may look like taking a couple of breaths as you are about to engage in the new activity.



Tips for Managing Anxiety



Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the practice of being in the present moment, fully aware without becoming overwhelmed by what we notice and without judgment of our experience of this moment. It is about paying attention on purpose.

Mindfulness can help you learn to tolerate difficult feelings without overthinking, minimizing, or reinforcing them. When you're able to hold some space for the feelings to stay, the power in those feelings will often dissipate. The worries and anxious feelings do not have to consume you or take you for an unwanted ride. Examples of mindfulness exercises include:

Guided Meditation

Mindful Breathing

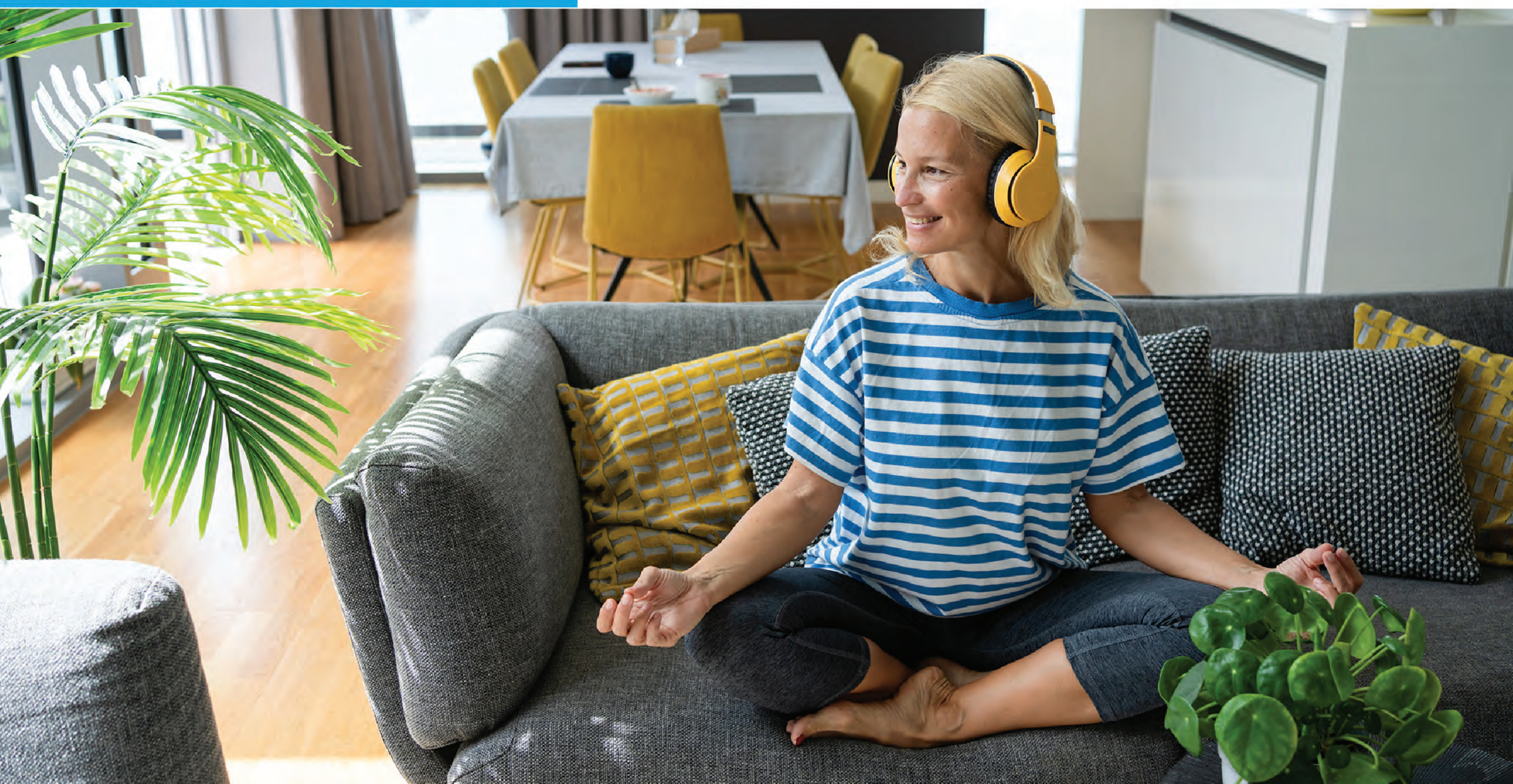
Walking Meditation

Visualization

Progressive Muscle Relaxation Meditation

Mantra Based Meditation

Coping skills are helpful in managing stress and exacerbation of anxiety. However, the real MVP of managing anxiety is YOU and the realization that you have always been the one to get through that obsessive thought, panic attack, and worry.



When Should I Get Help?



Consider getting help when the anxious thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations are causing you distress. You do not have to wait until it becomes overwhelming before seeking help.

The US Preventive Services Task Force drafted a recommendation that adults be regularly screened for anxiety.



If you're interested in learning more about these screening tools, and/or would like to just have someone to talk to, please visit us at www.cheservices.com.

You can meet and book a session with one of our compassionate and expert therapists online at our "Meet our Provider" scheduling page: <https://www.cheservices.com/providers>. Or call and speak to a live customer support and scheduling agent at: 888-831-2618

Additional Resources



Books and Websites

Books:

Rewire Your Anxious Brain: How to Use the Neuroscience of Fear to End Anxiety, Panic, and Worry
Paperback – January 2, 2015 by Catherine M. Pittman PhD and Elizabeth M. Karle MLIS

Stop Overthinking: 23 Techniques to Relieve Stress, Stop Negative Spirals, Declutter Your Mind, and Focus on the Present (The Path to Calm)
Paperback – March 1, 2021 by Nick Trenton

Unwinding Anxiety: New Science Shows How to Break the Cycles of Worry and Fear to Heal Your Mind
Paperback – August 30, 2022 by Judson Brewer

Web Links:

CHE Behavioral Health Services
www.cheservices.com

Anxiety and Depression Association of America
<https://adaa.org/tips>

American Psychological Association
<https://www.apa.org/topics/stress/anxiety-difference>

Center for Disease Control and Prevention
<https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/stress-coping/cope-with-stress/index.html>

Mindful: Healthy Mind, Healthy Life
<https://www.mindful.org/mindfulness-meditation-anxiety>



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