

# ANXIETY

## What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is one of the most common mental health challenges experienced by young people. It is a feeling of nervousness, fear, apprehension, and worrying. It is a reaction we can encounter when we experience difficult life circumstances. Sometimes these experiences are “real,” like a tough test or sports match. Other times, we create situations in our minds which cause anxiety, like worrying about a future event which spirals into bigger dilemmas. Anxiety symptoms can come and go but for some people, they last a long time and have a big impact on daily life.



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a youth engagement organization  
dedicated to changing the way young  
people think about mental health issues.

## Signs & Symptoms

### *BEHAVIOR*

- Avoidance of situations
- Obsessive compulsive disorder
- Distress in social situations
- Phobic behavior
- Increased use of alcohol or other drugs

### *PHYSICAL*

- Rapid heart rate and/or chest pain
- Rapid, shallow breathing, and shortness of breath
- Dizziness, headache, sweating, tingling, and numbness
- Choking, dry mouth, stomach pains, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea
- Muscle aches and pains, restlessness, tremors and shaking

### *PSYCHOLOGICAL*

- Excessive fear, worry, and nervousness
- Racing thoughts or mind going blank
- Decreased concentration and memory
- Anger, confusion and/or feeling on edge
- Sleep disturbances or vivid dreams

## Types of Anxiety Disorders

**Panic Attacks:** Sudden episode of intense apprehension, fear, or terror that can trigger physical reactions when there is no real danger or apparent cause.

**Generalized Anxiety Disorder:** Long-term anxiety and worry across a wide range of situations, like work or school.

**Phobic Disorders:** Intense fear of a particular situation or object like specific places, events, or objects that leads a person to avoid the situation or object.

## When I Should Get Help

If anxiety symptoms have been going on for awhile without improvement, seek professional advice from your primary care physician or a mental health therapist. A knowledgeable professional will help you talk about your concerns and introduce coping strategies. Some medications can also help with anxiety. The good news is that most young people experiencing anxiety respond well to support and treatment. While your anxiety might come and go, with help you can get back to enjoying life.

## Overcoming Anxiety

- Eat well, exercise, and find ways to relax with activities you enjoy
- Talk to a trusted adult like a family member, friend, teacher, or coach
- Learn some skills to cope with anxiety like positive self-talk, which will allow you to become more confident and motivated
- Avoid substance use

## Useful Websites & Phone Numbers

### Anxiety BC

[youth.anxietybc.com](http://youth.anxietybc.com)

### StarVista Crisis Center and Teen Chatroom

(650) 579-0350

[www.onyourmind.net](http://www.onyourmind.net)

### Crisis Text Line

Text HOME to 741741 in the US for FREE 24/7 crisis support.

[www.crisistextline.org](http://www.crisistextline.org)

### National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Helpline:

1-800-950-NAMI (6264)

[nami.org/Find-Support/NAMI-HelpLine](http://nami.org/Find-Support/NAMI-HelpLine)

### National Suicide Prevention

Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)  
[suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)