

Coping with Anxiety

A certain amount of anxiety in life is inevitable- the key is to learn to deal with our fears in a healthy manner.

EDUCATION

1. Learn about anxiety disorders and treatment options by consulting different resources.

- Self-help books
- Community mental health organizations
- Your family doctor
- Reliable internet sources (i.e www.adam.mb.ca and its related links)
- Ted Talks that deal with stress and anxiety
- Social workers
- Phone resources such as:
 - Klinik
 - Kids Help Line
 - Crisis Response Centre
 - Manitoba Suicide Line
 - Health Links

2. Find someone you know who has struggled with an anxiety disorder and ask them where they found the help they needed.

RELAXATION

1. Find activities that you enjoy and take the time to do them.

2. Soothe the soul (what does your body and heart want?)

3. Go for a walk, even a short walk can do wonders to calm a restless mind.

4. Learn specific relaxation techniques

- *Progressive Muscle Relaxation* (There is a link to *Calm CD* on our website under "Audio Relaxation)
- *Paced Breathing*
- *Visualization*

RECOGNIZE AUTOMATIC NEGATIVE THINKING (ANT)

Catastrophizing: "If I leave the heater on it will start a fire. My dog will die in horrible pain because I will not be able to save him. I will not be able to live with myself"

All or nothing thinking: "If I can't do it perfectly, then there is no reason to do it at all"

Personalizing: "My co-worker is upset. I must have done something wrong. They must hate me."

Overgeneralizing: "I never understand anything at school"

Negative mental filter : Pessimism – the glass is always half empty

“Should” Statements – Guilting and self-blame : “I should be more careful”

THINK REALISTICALLY

1. Re-evaluate Risks

- What is the worst thing that could possibly happen?
- How many times have I predicted this outcome, and how many times has it actually happened?
- Has it ever happened to anyone I know?
- Has this ever happened to anyone I know?
- Would I agree with similar predictions if they were made by someone else?

2. Use coping thoughts

- “I feel nervous, but that is okay.”
- “My heart is racing, but that will not hurt me.”
- “Not everyone has to like me.”
- “It is okay to make a mistake, that is part of being human.”
- “I can cope with disapproval, it is not that bad.”

RECOGNIZE MALADAPTIVE COPING PATTERNS

1. Avoidance

- Making excuses (e.g. illness, previous commitments)
- Hiding/Sleeping
- Not answering or returning calls and text messages

2. Arriving late and leaving early

3. Drugs/alcohol (“to take the edge off”)

4. Smoking

5. Television/video games

EXPOSE YOURSELF TO FEARFUL SITUATIONS

1. Face your fears one step at a time, gradually increasing in difficulty.

- Set realistic goals – I would like to go for supper with a group of my friends.
- Start small – I will start by just phoning a friend and talking to them
- In the middle- Now that I have phoned a friend, I will try going for coffee with them in my home.
Next I will have coffee with them in a public setting.
- Meet your goal- Now that I have slowly worked my way up I can go for supper with several of my closest friends.

2. Make sure your goals are realistic

3. Have as many “in the middle” steps as you need to achieve your final goal

4. Repeat these new behaviours frequently and regularly to stay comfortable with them