

## ANUx - SP | Managing Anxiety Part 1

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Hi I'm Amanda. I'm a counselor at the ANU Counseling Center I'm going to talk about anxiety management techniques for a healthy body. Anxiety is a normal emotion, which everyone experiences. Experiencing low levels of anxiety can be helpful, as it can motivate us, for example, studying more with the aim to do well in exams.

However, too much anxiety can be disabling. If our minds interpret a situation as dangerous, fearful, or threatening, physiological changes start happening to repair our body to protect itself from danger or threat. These physiological changes are what we commonly identify as anxiety, and the fight or flight mechanism.

So when we perceive fear, threat, or danger, our body will then automatically respond by providing us with extra energy in order to escape or fight the perceived fear, threat, or danger. The physiological changes result in physical side effects, which include sweating, trembling, and shaking, dizziness, nausea, pins and needles, racing heart, shortness of breath, urge to run or avoid.

If you experience the symptoms in everyday life, try and identify the fear based thought you are having, and ask yourself if the fear perceive is really warranted. If we do not use this extra energy to flee or fight the danger, then it is stored as tension in our muscles.

Over a long period of time, this tension will result also in difficulties sleeping, relaxing, and feeling healthy. These physical side effects of anxiety can be prevented or reduced by regular self-care and relaxation, such as, one, nurturing yourself, which includes eating at least three nutritious meals a day, avoiding or reducing alcohol, nicotine, and caffeine intake, as these substances can increase levels of anxiety.

Exercise daily, particularly of the cardiovascular kind. Exercise directly releases the buildup of tension in the muscles from turning on the anxiety response. Having a good sleep routine, and scheduling regular, relaxing, and enjoyable activities, being in nature, a massage, long shower, or bath, et cetera.

Two, breathing. Many people who live with high levels of anxiety and known to shallow breakthrough they chests and this will perpetuate symptoms of anxiety. It is best to breathe deeply and slowly from the diaphragm, which is the muscle located under your ribs, and above your stomach.

And you'll start to feel your body relax, which will in turn relax your mind. It is helpful to inhale through your nose to the count of at least four seconds, and then exhale through the mouth for at least five or six seconds or longer. It is best to try this breathing technique for 10 minutes twice a day, and any other time you're feeling anxious.

You will begin to strengthen the diaphragmatic muscle, and it will start to work normally, resulting in you feeling relaxed, calm, and grounded. Also practice this deep breathing whenever you are waiting for something, such as waiting in line, for an exam to start, or whenever you think of it.

Three, relaxation. When you are aware that your body's tense, or you feel that you cannot let go of worry or

stress, relaxing your body will make a big difference. Some ideas are progressive muscle relaxation technique. This involves tensing a particular muscle in your body for a short period of time, while you hold your breath at the count of up to five, and then releasing the muscle and breathe out slowly to the count of five.

Ideally, if you practice this technique 20 minutes per day, you will feel relaxed on the short and long term basis. Or imagine as you inhale, a number one moving towards your nose, then down your throat, to your chest, and then exhaled out from your mouth.

Then imagine number two moving towards you as you inhale. Continue with subsequent numbers, or say a word or an affirmation as you exhale, like relax or this discomfort will pass, let it go, or I can get through this, or I am calm and relaxed, or make up your own affirmation.

Four, be mindful. Mindfulness is about being aware more of our body, our senses, and surroundings in a non-judgmental way. And this can help us sit with feelings of anxiety in order to help us focus on what we need to do at the time to be effective. There are many mobile apps that provide guided mindfulness to assist you to notice more, such as Money Mind, Hit Space, Act Companion.

There are many techniques that can help with managing anxiety. Please do check out the University Counseling Center, [10 Best Anxiety Management Techniques](#) for more information. If you think you might benefit from face to face talk with a counselor here at the Center, call 61-252-442 to make an appointment.