

10 Tips for Coping with Anxiety (4-6 and 7-12)

Feeling anxious?

There is good anxiety and then there is unmanageable anxiety.

In life, we experience anxiety as part of our natural feelings such as when we are about to take a test, or give a big speech in front of tons of people. This is normal. But, when the anxiety feels constant, gnawing at your gut for weeks on end and is extremely difficult or impossible to manage, then that is when you need to reach out for help.

No matter the kind of anxiety that you may be experiencing, we feel these '10 Tips' will be helpful in helping ease the overwhelming feelings.

1. **Deep breathing:** Breathing is an important part of reducing anxiety. Try focusing on breathing in deeply for a count of 4, hold, then breathe out slowly for 4 quick seconds. This breath is used in yoga to calm the body and mind. You can also help younger children by getting them to visualize smelling a flower and blowing out a candle, or tracing your fingers up to the fingertips then slowly down each finger.
2. **Use sensory tools:** Create your own Toolkit of items that work well for calming your anxiety, some suggestions: a stress ball, sensory ring, lavender oil, coil hair tie, elastic band, glitter bottle, gum, headphones for music, putty and so much more.
3. **Reframe negative thoughts/realistic thinking:** This is a Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT) technique where you learn to focus on your thoughts then change them to something more positive. Our thoughts connect to how we feel and how we behave so by changing them to something positive it can help reduce anxiety. Remember to look at the evidence - What shows you that this thought is not true? What would you tell a friend in the same situation?

For example, thought: I am stupid.

Evidence- not true, I get good grades and study hard- my teacher even gave me great feedback on my work.

New thought: I am struggling with this assignment and need to ask for help.

4. **Take a break outside:** It's important to take breaks from electronics and enjoy some fresh air! Even try doing some of your schoolwork outside in the yard. Explore your neighborhood by trying different walks, slowing down, and appreciating the

environment you live in! In moments of panic and anxiety, our body gets heated up, so by going outside and getting fresh air, it can help cool down the body and calm anxiety.

5. **Exercise:** Try something new! There are lots of ways to get moving: yoga, zumba, kickboxing, gymnastics etc. Try creating different playlists for your workouts to improve your mood and increase your energy!
6. **Mindfulness & Grounding:** There are many ways to slow down and be mindful. Try engaging all your 5 senses and truly be in the moment when you are doing an activity. For example, while you are eating, slow down and savor each bite and texture of what you are consuming, How does it smell? What does it remind you of? There are plenty of free apps with mindful meditations as well! (Insight Timer, Mindshift, Headspace, etc.)

Try 5-4-3-2-1 grounding if you feel that you may be experiencing a panic attack:

5-things that you can see

4-things that you can feel

3-things you can hear

2-things you can smell

1-thing you can taste.

7. **Self-care:** Incorporate some of these self-soothing strategies into your daily routine: a hot bath, make some tea, light a candle, watch a funny video, lay on the grass while watching the clouds pass, watch the sunset, and/or paint your nails.
8. **Journaling:** Write about how you are feeling, such as what are you grateful for? Ponder on happy memories, what you are proud of, and what your dreams are for when you are older. Defeat negative thoughts in your journal by making a list of the evidence like a lawyer proving a case in a courtroom.
9. **Positive Distractions:** Find a healthy activity to do to distract yourself from the anxiety. Some suggestions: a puzzle, paint by number art, baking, write a song or poem, draw, watercolour paint, board game or cards. In moments of panic try one of these distraction techniques: count to 100 by fours, name all blue things in the room, name items by categories - dog breeds, hockey teams, sea animals etc.
10. **Talk about it!** Don't be afraid to ask your family and friends for help. Talking through your worries will make you feel much better and help you take control of

your thoughts. Oftentimes, we need to talk through things to see the whole picture and keep our thoughts realistic. It's normal to feel anxiety from time to time, and expressing your concerns can help you come up with solutions. If you are not ready to speak to your personal connections there are professionals here to help you such as, Kids help phone (text "CONNECT" to 686868).

According to the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), 12% of people are affected by an anxiety disorder in any given year.* You are not alone! Anxiety is also a natural response to life's stress that happens once in a while to all of us. We hope that these 10 tips on how to manage those anxious feelings will help make them less intense.

***<https://cmha.bc.ca/documents/anxiety-disorders>**