

## Normal anxiety or an anxiety disorder?

Anxiety is hardwired into our brains. It is part of the body's fight-or-flight response, which prepares us to act quickly in the face of danger. It is a normal response to situations of uncertainty, trouble, or feeling unprepared. However, if common everyday events bring on severe and persistent anxiety or panic that interferes with life, you may have an anxiety disorder.

## What's the Difference?

### Normal Anxiety or *Anxiety Disorder*

Occasional worry about circumstantial events, such as an exam or breakup, that may leave you upset

*Constant, chronic, and unsubstantiated worry that causes significant distress, disturbs your social life, and interferes with classes and work*

Embarrassment or self-consciousness in the face of an uncomfortable social situation

*Avoidance of common social situations for fear of being judged, embarrassed, or humiliated*

Random cases of "nerves" or jitters, dizziness or sweating over an exam, oral presentation, or other important event

*Repeated, random panic attacks or persistent worry and anticipation of another panic attack and feelings of terror or impending doom*

Realistic fear of a threatening object, place, or situation

*Irrational fear or avoidance of an object, place, or situation that poses little or no threat of danger*

Wanting to be sure that you are healthy and living in a safe, hazard-free environment

*Performing uncontrollable, repetitive actions, such as washing your hands repeatedly or checking things over and over*

Anxiety, sadness, or difficulty sleeping immediately following a traumatic event

*Ongoing and recurring nightmares, flashbacks, or emotional numbing relating to a traumatic event in your life that occurred several months or years ago*

**See yourself? If you can relate to any of these descriptions of anxiety and related disorders, talk to someone who can help as soon as possible.**

# Stress BUSTERS

Whether you have normal anxiety or an anxiety disorder, OCD, or PTSD, these strategies will help you cope:

**Exercise.** Physical activity helps your body and mind. Go to the gym. Take a jog. Go for a walk. Do yoga. Play Frisbee. Just get moving!

**Eat a balanced diet.** Don't skip meals. Try to eat from all of the food groups. Try to minimize soda and coffee because caffeine can trigger anxiety and panic attacks.

**Limit alcohol and stay away from illegal drugs.** Alcohol and drugs aggravate anxiety and can also cause panic attacks.

**Get involved.** Being active in the community creates a support network and gives you a break from your everyday stress.

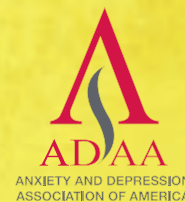
**Do your BEST instead of trying to be PERFECT.** We all know perfection isn't possible, so be proud of however close you get.

**Take a time-out.** Take a deep breath and count to 10. Stepping back from a problem lets you clear your head. Do yoga. Meditate. Get a massage. Learn relaxation techniques. Listen to music.

**Put things in perspective.** Think about your situation. Ask yourself whether it's really as bad as you think it is or if you could be blowing it out of proportion.

**Talk to someone.** Don't bottle up emotions to the verge of explosion. Reach out to your roommate, boyfriend, girlfriend, or counselor if you're feeling low.

**Find out what triggers your anxiety.** Take notes or write in a journal when you're feeling anxious or stressed, and then look for patterns.



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# Got anXxiety?



# Get HELP.

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

## College can be stressful!

Between school, work, friends, family, and being independent for the first time in your life, you are pulled in different directions. What's worse, all of these responsibilities take away from the time you might need to take care of yourself. Add to that the physical and developmental changes, and it's easy to see how you might become anxious.

Anxiety is a normal reaction to life-changing events. We all get stressed out or anxious, but most of us bounce back. But anxiety that is so frequent, intense, and uncontrollable that it hinders daily routines may be a sign of an anxiety disorder.

The good news? Help is available.

## So what is an anxiety disorder and who can have one?

Anxiety disorders are real, serious, and treatable conditions that...

- more than 40 million men and women in the United States are diagnosed with every year.
- almost seven percent of college students report having symptoms.
- can occur at any age but often will surface during a person's teens or twenties.

Take the time to figure out whether the anxiety you are experiencing is the same anxiety we all have occasionally or whether it is so persistent and severe that it may be an anxiety disorder.

## The ABCs of Anxiety Disorders

“Anxiety disorders” is a broad term; it encompasses psychiatric (as in real, or medical) disorders. Although the symptoms of each anxiety disorder vary in different people, they all provoke extreme fear or worry that interferes with a normal lifestyle.

**Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD):** Excessive uncontrollable worry about everyday issues, including school, work, money, friends, and health

**Social anxiety disorder:** Avoidance of everyday social situations due to extreme anxiety about being judged by others or behaving in a way that might cause embarrassment or ridicule

**Panic disorder:** Severe attacks of terror, which may feel like you’re having a heart attack or going crazy, for no apparent reason

**Agoraphobia:** Intense fear and anxiety of any place or situation where escape might be difficult, leading to avoidance of situations such as being alone outside of the home; traveling in a car, bus, or airplane; or being in a crowded area

**Specific phobias:** Intense fear reaction that leads to avoiding an object, place, or situation such as riding in elevators or driving on bridges; those with specific phobias typically recognize that the fear is irrational and inappropriate for the circumstance

**Selective mutism:** A consistent failure to speak in specific social situations by someone who is normally capable of speech

**Separation anxiety:** Inappropriate and excessive fear or anxiety when faced with separation from the home or from specific people.

**Obsessive-compulsive disorder and posttraumatic stress disorder are closely related to anxiety disorders, which some may experience at the same time.**

**Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD):** Persistent, recurring thoughts (obsessions) that reflect exaggerated anxiety or fears and manifest as repetitive behaviors or rituals (compulsions); for example, the uncontrollable need to scrub hands repeatedly or the insistence on absolute neatness and order

**Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD):** Avoidance, detachment, difficulty sleeping and concentrating, and reliving a traumatic event or experience several months or years after it has occurred

**These disorders are real, serious, and treatable.**

# Anxiety Disorders Can Happen to Anyone

## Panic Disorder

Sarah had just finished her first round of finals in college. Suddenly a huge wave of terror swept over her. Her heart began to pound and she couldn’t breathe. She felt as if she had left her body and her world was closing in on her. She thought she might be dying. When the feelings passed as quickly as they came on, she was relieved. But when it happened again the next day and the day after that, her roommate took her to the campus health center where a doctor suggested she check out her university’s counseling center. A therapist there explained to Sarah that she had **panic disorder**. She continued seeing the therapist and also went to a self-help group where she met other students with panic disorder. Eventually she learned to control and cope with her panic attacks.

## Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

Evan was late for class again because he was sure he’d left on his toaster oven and forgot to lock the door. It was the sixth time today he checked. He had no idea why he felt the need to keep doing the same things over and over until he heard about **OCD** in his psychology class. His professor was able to recommend a psychologist who, with treatment, helped him control his checking habits.

## Social Anxiety Disorder

Taylor had always been shy—rarely participating in class discussions and avoiding parties. But turning down the chance to go to a close friend’s 21st birthday party was a signal that the problem was more than just normal shyness. Coincidentally reading an article about **social anxiety disorder**, Taylor recognized the description as a personal one. The next step was getting referred to a psychiatrist and a social worker. Thanks to a combination of medication and cognitive behavioral therapy (a specific type of psychotherapy), Taylor learned to confront and participate in social events instead of avoiding them. Making a commitment to help others also motivated Taylor to establish a support group on campus.

## You are not alone.

Tell someone—a friend, a professor, a counselor.

Watch “Glass People” about college-age anxiety and the great value of finding professional help. Find it here: [vimeo.com/64255657](https://vimeo.com/64255657)

## Get help.

## Treating Anxiety Disorders

Anxiety disorders treatment may involve therapy or medication or a combination of both. The good news is treatment works! With time and patience, up to 90 percent of people who obtain proper care from a health professional will recover and go on to live full and productive lives.

It is important to get help **NOW**. An untreated anxiety disorder may lead to academic problems, secondary conditions such as substance abuse or depression, and—in extreme cases—suicide. Early treatment can help prevent these problems. Visit your campus health or counseling center to find out about their services. Bring a friend if you’re nervous about going alone. Many colleges offer free individual and group counseling sessions. Visit **The Jed Foundation** ([jedfoundation.org](http://jedfoundation.org)) to learn about programs on college campuses that promote mental health and prevent suicide.

Or you may choose to see your pediatrician or family physician, who may be able to treat you or recommend a psychiatrist, psychologist, clinical social worker, counselor, or psychiatric nurse. Regardless of where you seek treatment, it’s crucial that you are comfortable with who is treating you and how you are being treated. Visit the **Anxiety and Depression Association of America** ([adaa.org](http://adaa.org)) to learn about treatment options and questions to ask a therapist.

## Help a Friend

If someone close to you has an anxiety disorder, here’s how you can help:

**Learn about the disorder.** Understanding what your friend or roommate is going through will help you give support, and keep your own worry under control. The Anxiety and Depression Association of America ([adaa.org](http://adaa.org)) provides information and can help you find a therapist.

**Realize and accept stressful periods.** Modify your expectations of how your friend *should* act and be sure to be extra supportive during difficult times.

**Everyone experiences anxiety differently.** Be tolerant, supportive, and nonjudgmental.

**Be encouraging and don’t get discouraged.** Give praise for even the smallest accomplishment. Stay positive.

**Talk to someone.** Being supportive all the time is difficult, so make sure you have someone—a roommate, friend, family member, or counselor—to support *you*. **Active Minds** ([activeminds.org](http://activeminds.org)) has chapters on many college campuses that are there to help you.