



Anxiety

What is anxiety?

Everyone feels anxious at times—it's a normal reaction to stress. Dealing with anxiety is hard, but there are steps you can take to help you feel better. When overwhelming feelings of worry don't go away, or they make it hard to do your daily routine, you may have an anxiety disorder and need more support. We're here to help.

Anxiety disorders are very common

About **1** in **4** people in the United States will develop an anxiety disorder during their lifetime.



What are the symptoms?

You can have both physical and emotional symptoms of anxiety.

Physical symptoms

- Being jittery
- Rapid heartbeat
- Muscle tension
- Feeling out of breath or tired
- Sweaty or cold hands
- Not able to sleep

Emotional symptoms

- Fear
- Worry
- Tense/can't relax
- Easily irritable
- Thoughts that something bad will happen



Anxiety

Ways to care for yourself

There are steps you can take to help you reduce anxiety and feel better.



Reach out to people in your life for support during times of stress.



Tell yourself: “This isn’t an emergency. I’m not in danger. I can keep going, even though I feel anxious.”



Set aside 15 minutes to an hour each day to do all your worrying. Write down your fears in detail. When worries come to mind during other parts of the day, save them on a list for the next worry time.



Reduce or eliminate caffeine. Caffeine makes anxious feelings worse, and can make it hard to sleep.



Don’t use alcohol, drugs, or tobacco to cope with anxiety. Even a little bit can make you feel worse. Smoking can make you feel edgy.



Exercise. Try to get 30 minutes of physical activity at least 5 days a week. You don’t have to do it all at once. You can break up your activities throughout the day.



Practice deep breathing. Breathe through your nose counting to 4. Breathe deeply into your belly. Breathe out slowly through your nose counting to 6. Continue breathing deeply in this way for a few minutes.

Are you thinking about taking herbs?

Some herbs are known to treat anxiety, but can have other serious side effects. Ask your doctor before using herbs, to see if they are safe for you.

When to contact us

If anxiety keeps you from doing your daily activities or is causing discomfort and self-care doesn’t help:

- Make an appointment with your doctor or call our Mental Health Department or Psychiatry to talk to a counselor or other specialist.
- Contact your Health Education Department for classes that teach skills to relieve anxiety.

Other resources

For more health information, tools, classes, and other resources:

- Search kp.org/mydoctor
- Contact your local Health Education Department

If you are hit, hurt or threatened by a partner or spouse, this can seriously affect your health, including your anxiety. There is help. Call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233 or connect to ndvh.org.

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult your doctor.

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No matter how depressed you are, you can feel better.

Depression is more than having the blues or feeling a little down. Depression is a serious medical condition that can affect your physical and emotional well-being.

If you've had 5 or more of the following symptoms nearly every day for more than 2 weeks, you may have depression:

- Feeling sad, blue, tearful, hopeless, or down.
- Showing little interest or pleasure in things you used to enjoy (including sex).
- Changes in appetite, causing you to gain or lose weight.
- Sleeping much more or less than usual.
- Feeling restless, irritable, or angry.

- Feeling tired or a loss of energy.
- Feeling worthless or a lot of guilt.
- Having a hard time concentrating, remembering, or making decisions.
- Thinking about death or suicide.

If you are thinking of harming yourself, call 911 or go to the nearest hospital. You may also call the Suicide Hotline at 1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433).

Contributing factors

Many things can contribute to depression. These can include:

- Changes in brain chemicals.
- Other illnesses or disabilities.
- Personal or family history of depression.
- Major life events (loss of a loved one, work stress, retirement, divorce, or marital difficulties).
- Domestic violence and other types of trauma.
- Alcohol or drug abuse.

Self-care

There are several actions you can take to improve your mood. Try some of these tips for taking care of yourself.

Get moving

Exercise is good for your mind and body. Over time you will have more energy, reduce stress, and feel better. You can start with walking a few blocks and work your way up to 30 minutes of physical activity most days of the week.

Find joy again

Believe it or not, pleasure is good for you! Think of things that you enjoy—big or small—and do them. It can be anything from listening to music or walking your dog to spending time with friends. You may have to push yourself at first, but it will help you feel better.

Reach out

Get in touch with friends or family. Depression can get worse if you isolate yourself. Meaningful contact with others can help you feel less lonely.

Pay attention to what you eat

It can be hard to eat right when you feel low. Don't skip meals, starting with breakfast. Switch to healthier snacks and eat regular-sized portions.

Avoid alcohol, caffeine, and illegal drugs

Many people who are depressed start drinking more caffeine or alcohol, or take illegal drugs to help them feel better. But these can make things worse and interfere with prescribed medicines. Get support for making healthier choices.

Be positive

As you start these steps, tell yourself you are doing the right things to improve your health. Look for signs that your depression is getting better, such as going back to activities you enjoy or connecting with friends. Remind yourself that these are positive steps.

What to do when self-care doesn't work

No matter how depressed you are, you can feel better. Self-care may be enough to pull you out of a mild depression. For a more serious depression, professional help may be needed.

The good news is that medical treatment can help symptoms of depression. Treatment includes counseling, medication, classes, and guided self-care.

You can get professional treatment at Kaiser Permanente in the Department of Psychiatry or Mental Health. Health care professionals in the Department of Medicine can also treat you with medications.

Call Kaiser Permanente if ...

- You have thoughts of suicide.
- Home treatment doesn't help lift your mood within 2 weeks.
- You have 5 or more symptoms of depression nearly every day for 2 or more weeks.

Additional resources

For more health information, tools, health classes, and other resources visit:

- kp.org/mydoctor
- kp.org/depression
- kp.org/carefordepression (a customized online depression program)

Contact your Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center or Department.

Books

- The Feeling Good Handbook, David Burns (2008).

If you are hit, hurt, or threatened by a partner or spouse, this can seriously affect your health. There is help. Call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233 or connect to ndvh.org.

PERSONAL ACTION PLAN

Tuning into your Body



A **goal** is something you want to accomplish but may take a while to achieve, such as decreasing your blood pressure or managing chronic stress.

Action plans are short-term plans that help you reach your goal. They must include a specific action or behavior that you want to do and know that you will be able to accomplish. Your plan must answer the questions:

- **What** are you going to do? → **How many times** or **how much** are you going to do it?
- **When** are you going to do it? → **How often** are you going to do it?

Action plan example:

→ I will do progressive muscle relaxation (*what*) for 20 minutes (*how much*) after lunch (*when*) three days (*how often*) this week.

my action plan

This week I will:

(*what*)

(*how much / many times*)

(*when*)

(*how often*)

(*over*)

Your **confidence level** is an indicator of how certain you are that you will succeed with your action plan. You must attach a confidence level of 0 to 10 to your plan. A confidence level of 7 or more will help you to succeed. If your confidence level is lower than 7, think about changing your action plan.

How **confident** are you that you will succeed with your plan?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(0 = not at all confident

10 = totally confident)

Your confidence level should be a 7 or higher.

Things that could make it difficult to fulfill my action plan:

My plan for overcoming these challenges:

Support and resources I will need to fulfill my action plan:

My reward: _____

Review date: _____ With: _____

My signature: _____



Discuss your health goals and next steps with a health coach. Call **1-866-251-4514** (toll free) to begin health coaching today!





There are many ways you can relax. Deep breathing, muscle relaxation, relaxation response and visualization are good ways to improve your health and reduce stress.

Relaxation has many benefits. It can help you feel calmer, think more clearly, and relieve stress, headaches and tight muscles. Whether you want to take a break from a stressful day or manage your stress long-term, regular relaxation practice can help you get back to a calmer state.

There are many ways to relax. Common methods are: deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, relaxation response and visualization. In practicing these skills, it is important to find a quiet place where you will not be disturbed. Try out each exercise for 10 to 20 minutes a day to see what helps you most.

Developing these skills may be slow at first, but once you have trained your mind and body to relax, you'll be able to get to a relaxed state quickly.

Deep breathing

When done with purpose, deep breathing helps calm you down. It can help you let go of stress and worries and focus on the present moment.

How to do deep breathing

Find a comfortable lying down or sitting position. When starting out, it may help to do deep breathing lying down on your bed or on the floor.

- Bend your knees and place your feet comfortably apart. Loosen any tight clothing. Uncross your legs and arms and close your eyes.
- **Inhale.** Place both hands on your lower stomach and breathe in as deeply as you can so that the incoming air expands that area and gently pushes against your hands. Breathe in to the count of six. If it helps, imagine a balloon in your stomach is inflating when you inhale.
- **Exhale.** Imagine the tension and stress leaving your body as you slowly breathe out. Imagine the balloon in your stomach is deflating.
- With each breath, think to yourself, "I am relaxing and letting go. I feel very comfortable and relaxed. My breath is calm and regular."

- Practice this several times. Keep your eyes closed and direct your attention to your breathing as it flows in and out.

Start with five deep breaths. This may take 1 to 2 minutes. Slowly increase your practice time to five minutes.

If you feel light-headed, dizzy, or anxious, you may be breathing too deeply or quickly. If this happens, stop for a moment and breathe normally until the symptoms pass. Inhale and exhale through your nose to prevent hyperventilation.

Progressive muscle relaxation

The body responds to tense situations with muscle tension, which can cause pain or discomfort. Progressive muscle relaxation will help you reduce stress-related health problems, become more relaxed and fall asleep easier.

This exercise involves tensing and releasing each muscle group. By tightening then releasing a muscle, it will relax to its pre-tensed state and allow your body to feel more relaxed than it was before the exercise.

You may use a recording to go through all the muscle groups, or just follow the instructions below.

Note: If you have fibromyalgia or myofascial pain syndrome, check with your health care professional before practicing progressive muscle relaxation.

How to do progressive muscle relaxation

- Pick a place where you can stretch out comfortably, such as on a mat or carpeted floor. Close your eyes, and mentally scan the areas of your body that feel tense or tight.
- Inhale as you tense a muscle group. Hold the tension for 4 to 10 seconds. The sensation should be hard, but not to the point of cramping.
- Release the muscles as you exhale, and give yourself 10 to 20 seconds to relax.
- As you continue the exercise, notice what you feel in each area of your body. Imagine you are breathing relaxation into the area and letting go each time you exhale.

How to tense muscle groups

- Hands: Make a fist.
- Wrists and forearms: Extend arms and bend hands back at the wrist.
- Biceps and upper arms: Make a fist, bend arms at the elbows, and flex biceps.
- Triceps: Straighten and feel tension along back of the arms.
- Shoulders: Shrug them.
- Forehead: Wrinkle it into a deep frown.
- Eyes and bridge of the nose: Close eyes as tightly as possible. (Remove contact lenses before beginning this exercise).
- Cheeks and jaw: Grin from ear to ear.
- Around the mouth: Press lips together tightly.
- Tongue: Press against roof of mouth.
- Neck: Press head back as far as it will go against the supporting surface. Roll head to the right, to the left, and bring forward to your chest.

- Chest: Take a deep breath, hold it, and exhale.
- Back: Arch up and away from the supporting surface.
- Stomach: Suck into a tight knot, then release.
- Hips and Buttocks: Squeeze buttock cheeks tightly together.
- Thighs: Clench hard.
- Calves and lower legs: Flex toes toward your face, as if trying to bring them to touch your head.
- Lower legs and feet: Point toes away from your head and curl them downward at the same time.

Relaxation response

Relaxation response slows the heart rate and breathing, lowers blood pressure and relieves muscle tension. It also helps reduce stressful feelings and refocuses your thoughts.

How to do relaxation response

- Sit quietly in a comfortable position with your eyes closed. Become aware of your breathing.
- Breathe slowly and steadily from your belly, not from your chest.
- Each time you breathe out let out a deep sigh (“ahhhh”) silently or aloud.
- You can also choose to fix your gaze on a stationary object while breathing quietly. A mental stimulus helps shift your mind away from distracting thoughts.
- Continue this for 10 to 20 minutes. Allow distracting thoughts to drift away, like waves on the beach.

- Sit quietly until you are ready to open your eyes.

Visualizing a special place

While practicing relaxation response, it may also help to think of a place that you find relaxing and comfortable. As you close your eyes and breathe, think of that special place. It may be at home, or someplace such as the beach or the mountains.

How to do visualization

- Imagine all the details: Smells, sounds, colors. Let yourself get comfortable in this spot.
- Let go of all your stresses. Continue to breathe deeply. For 10 to 20 minutes, enjoy your special place.
- Sit quietly for a few minutes, breathing deeply, until you are ready to open your eyes.

Be patient and gentle with yourself as you start your journey to greater relaxation. Once you have a routine to practice these techniques, stress reduction and relaxation should come with little effort.

Additional resources:

- Visit our Website at kp.org/mindbody.
- For a customized online stress management plan, check out: kp.org/healthylifestyles.



mind • body • spirit

The Road to Resilience

Support Resources from Kaiser Permanente

Take steps to build resilience and bounce back from stressful life events.



CLASSES

Pathways to Emotional Wellness

(1 session, no fee)

Provides an overview of mind-body resources to reduce stress, deal with anxiety, and lessen depression to help you take your next steps to wellness.

Managing Stress

(6 sessions, no fee)

Helps you recognize the sources of stress in your life, manage symptoms, and develop a healthier lifestyle.

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction

(8 sessions, fee required)

Teaches mindfulness meditation and gentle meditative movement to cope better with stress, chronic pain, ongoing illnesses, depression, difficulty sleeping, and other issues.

Managing Depression

(6 sessions, no fee)

Learn to challenge negative thoughts and approach your life with mindfulness.

Understanding Anxiety

(6 sessions, no fee)

Identify what triggers anxiety for you as well as ways to manage your symptoms.

Managing Anger

(8 sessions, fee required)

When anger causes problems with family, friends, or colleagues, we can help.

For more information or to register for classes, visit or call your local Health Education Center or Department.

INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING

You don't need a referral from your doctor to talk to a therapist or counselor in our Mental Health or Chemical Dependency Departments.

BEHAVIORAL MEDICINE

Behavioral medicine specialists (or consultants) are available at most locations. They provide treatment to help you manage stress and build healthy coping skills. Treatment targets a specific problem area. To meet with a behavioral medicine specialist, ask your doctor to schedule an appointment for you.

ONLINE RESOURCES

For podcasts, videos, and online programs, go to kp.org/mydoctor and search for "stress," "anxiety," "depression," "sleep," or other topics.

LOCAL SUPPORT GROUPS AND CLASSES

o kp.org/mentalhealth

o findyourwords.org

o Kaiser Permanente Psychiatry: 408-366-4400

o National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI): (408) 453-0400

o Domestic Violence Hotline: (800) 799-7233

o Suicide Prevention Hotline: (800) 273-8255 or Text: "Home" to 741741

o Caregiver Alliance: (800) 445-8106

o Bereavement Support: (408) 243-0222



Resources You Can Use on Your Own



Healing can happen so you can:

- Connect with others.
- Be in touch with your body (sometimes called “grounding”).
- Express emotions in a safe and healthy way.
- Work off stress physically.
- Be fully present in the moment.
- Feel joy.

Activities can include:

- Playing a game or sport or doing other physical activities.
- Painting, drawing, or other artistic expression.
- Breathing exercises, meditation, yoga, or other mindfulness activities.
- Singing or playing a musical instrument.
- Participating in a support group.
- Dancing, singing, or chanting in your faith community or spiritual group, or drumming in a drum circle.
- Journaling (suggested book: *Writing to Heal: A Guided Journal for Recovering from Trauma and Emotional Upheaval* by J. W. Pennebaker).



BOOKS

Buddha’s Brain: The Practical Neuroscience of Happiness, Love, and Wisdom by Rick Hanson and Richard Mendius

They Can’t Find Anything Wrong! by David D. Clarke

Childhood Disrupted: How Your Biography Becomes Your Biology, and How You Can Heal by Donna Jackson Nakazawa

mindfulness reduces stress, improves emotional well-being, increases self-awareness, and helps with anxiety, depression, and chronic pain. This app offers exercises, information, and a tracking log.

- **iChill:** Available at the App Store and Google Play. This app teaches a set of skills to help you build resilience.

VIDEOS

- **Connected Parents, Connected Kids** by Futures Without Violence at: youtu.be/JOmj5VVYyF0 (7 min)

- **How Childhood Trauma Affects Health Across a Lifetime** by Dr. Nadine Burke-Harris at: youtu.be/95ovIJ3dsNk (TED talk, 16 min)



ONLINE

- **Free Guided Meditations:** Listen to guided meditations from the University of California. Visit marc.ucla.edu and choose “Free Guided Meditations.”
- **“Just One Thing” Newsletter:** Sign up for Rick Hanson’s “Just One Thing” free weekly newsletters that bring simple practices for more fulfilling relationships and peace of mind. Visit rickhanson.net/writings/just-one-thing/
- **ACEs Too High News Blog:** Find research about adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), including the health consequences of toxic stress. Visit acestoohigh.com

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other medical professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor. If you have questions or need more information about your medication, please speak to your pharmacist. Some photos may include models and not actual patients.



Stress List Activity

KAISER PERMANENTE

A Stress List is one way to know and identify stressors in your life. It can help point out which stressors are not worth worrying over, and which stressors you can control and change. Use these lists to begin to take action and make a change to better manage stress in your life.

Step 1

- Using the lines below, write down a list of 1-5 things that cause you worry or fear. They can be things related to home, work, finances, health, or anything else you may think of.

In my control?

Stressors List

- What items do you feel you **have some control over**? Put an “X” in the box by those items. You may be surprised to see how many stressors you actually can and do cope with on a daily basis.
- Reflection: Look at the list you wrote. Are more of your stressors things you can or cannot control?
- Write down the items with an “X” in the lines below.

Things I CAN Control

Fix, Eliminate, Accept

F E A

F E A

F E A

F E A

F E A

Coping Strategies: How might you address the items you listed?

- 5) On the right side of the list, there are letters **F**, **E** and **A**. These stand for Fix, Eliminate, and Accept. **These are strategies you can use to cope with the stressors.**
- Can you Fix the stressor? (find a solution so the stressor does not bother you)
 - Can you Eliminate the stressor? (remove it from your life)
 - Can you Accept the stressor? (accept the stressor and move on)
- 6) Next to each item you wrote, circle the letter of the strategy you feel will **best** address the stressor.
- 7) Reflection: After you have identified how to cope with the stressors that you can control, how do you feel? How has your stress about these things changed?

Step 2

- 8) Now, go to the “Stressors List” and look at the items with no “X.” These are the things you feel you **have no control over**.
- 9) Write down the items without an “X” in the lines below.

Things I CANNOT Control

Eliminate, Accept

_____	E	A
_____	E	A
_____	E	A
_____	E	A
_____	E	A

- 10) On the right side of the list, there are letters **E** and **A**, indicating the coping strategies of “eliminate” and “accept.” Notice how “fix” is not a strategy, because if you can’t control the stressor, you cannot fix it.
- Can you Eliminate the stressor? (remove it from your life)
 - Can you Accept the stressor? (accept the stressor and move on)
- 11) Next to each item you wrote, circle the letter of the strategy you feel will **best** address the stressor.
- 12) Reflection: After you have identified how to cope with the stressors that you **cannot control**, how do you feel? How has your stress about these things changed?