

# Coping with Stress & Anxiety



Activities and videos to  
help you learn how to  
manage and decrease  
**stress** and **anxiety**

*There are a number of mental health issues that cause young people to feel less than their best; however, the two that are the most common are stress and anxiety.*

*We all experience stress and anxiety from time to time—it's part of life. However, if we have too much stress or feel overly anxious, it can interfere with our day-to-day lives.*

*The tips and suggestions in this booklet will show you ways to deal with stress and anxiety—so that you can enjoy life more.*

## Understanding stress

### Do you often feel stressed?

**Stress is your body's reaction to change, demands, and difficult situations.**

Difficulties with friends...pressure to achieve...problems at home.

These are just a few of the many things causing young people stress today.

Below are some common symptoms of stress. Read each question and mark it *Yes* or *No*.

**Yes** **No**

Do you often feel overwhelmed?

Do you have trouble sleeping?

Do you often feel frustrated, nervous, or angry?

Do you get a lot of headaches and/or stomachaches?

Do you have a hard time relaxing?

Do you eat too much or too little?

Do you feel dread or panic when thinking about everything you need to do?

*Answering Yes to most or all of these questions could indicate that stress is an issue for you.*

## Reducing stress

It's impossible to avoid stress completely, but developing healthy coping strategies will help you manage, and reduce, the stress you have.

- 1. Identify your stressors and make a plan.** The first step to managing stress is to identify your stressors. *What stresses you out?*

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Once you identify your stressors, you can come up with a plan to deal with them. For example, if math tests are a stressor, you can make a plan to spread your studying out over several days and meet with your teacher for a help session. *Choose one of the stressors you listed above. Then write out a simple plan that will help you feel less stressed.*

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- 2. Ask yourself if you are doing too much.** Many young people feel stressed because they have too much to do—schoolwork, extra-curricular activities, family obligations, and perhaps a part-time job. *If you feel that you've taken on too much, what is something you can eliminate, shorten, or postpone?*

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- 3. Get support.** Confide in others when you're feeling stressed. Talk to a parent or family member, your counselor, or a favorite teacher. Talking helps you sort things out, and getting another's perspective can help you come up with solutions to problems. *It's much healthier to share your concerns than it is to go it alone!*

# Understanding anxiety

The start of a new school year, doing something that scares you, waiting to hear if you passed the test, made the team, or got the job—all of these things can make you feel nervous and anxious. Occasional anxiety is something we all experience. It's a natural reaction to events or situations we find frightening or stressful.

## Do you frequently feel anxious?

For most people, the feelings of anxiety go away when the situation that caused it is over, or the problem is resolved. For some, however, anxiety is a persistent problem.

Below are some common symptoms of anxiety. Read each question and mark it Yes or No.

Yes	No	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you frequently feel nervous and on edge?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you have trouble relaxing?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you obsess over what has happened in the past and/or what is about to happen?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are you often restless and unable to focus?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you have constant feelings of fear and/or dread?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are you easily annoyed or irritated, even by minor things?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you worry excessively or have a hard time controlling negative thoughts?

Answering Yes to most or all of these questions could indicate that anxiety is an issue for you.

*Social anxiety—feeling very uncomfortable in social situations—is different from general anxiety. Watch this short video to learn more.*



## Reducing anxiety

The best way to deal with anxiety is to have a toolbox of calming techniques. These may include deep breathing, visualization, mindfulness, and meditation.

- 1. Find what calms you.** When you feel anxiety creeping in, the key is to identify activities that will help you relax and feel calm. *What do you do to feel calm?* (Check all that apply, or add your own.)

- |   |  |                                      |
|---|--|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> listen to soft music | <input type="checkbox"/> take a walk     | <input type="checkbox"/> watch tv    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> read a book          | <input type="checkbox"/> play with a pet | <input type="checkbox"/> go outside  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> talk to someone      | <input type="checkbox"/> take a bath     | <input type="checkbox"/> other _____ |

- 2. Try deep breathing and visualization.** Close your eyes and relax all of your muscles. Take a deep cleansing breath, slowly count to four, and then slowly release your breath. As you breathe out, blow away all of your anxiety and stress. Repeat several times.

Now try adding visualization. Close your eyes, breathe deeply, and imagine a relaxing scene, adding as many details as you can. *What did your relaxing scene look like?*

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- 3. Use meditation.** Meditation is the act of tuning out the world and tuning in to your mind and body. Meditating can help you feel calm, centered, and grounded. The best part? Anyone can meditate—and there are many ways to do it. *Put a check next to the ones you would like to try, or come up with your own.*

- sit in a quiet room and focus on your breathing
- take a walk and enjoy the sounds, sights, and smells of nature
- try a guided meditation app like Calm or Meditation Studio
- turn on music and focus on the rhythm and beat
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# Improving your mental health

While you will never be able to avoid stress and anxiety completely, you can work on improving your mental health so that you feel stronger and more confident—and are better able to manage stressful and anxious feelings and situations.

*Here are some ways that you can improve your mental health.*

## 1. Be grateful

Research shows that people who make an effort to be grateful are less stressed, sleep better, and experience fewer health problems. Taking small moments every day to be grateful can go a long way in improving your mood and overall well-being.

Who is someone you are thankful for?

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What is a place you are thankful for?

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What is something you love about yourself?

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## 2. Practice mindfulness

Mindfulness is simply making the effort to notice things that you wouldn't normally pay attention to. It means being aware of the sights, sounds, smells, and textures around you. *Being mindful is also about paying attention to yourself and how you feel.*

**Try this.** Clear your mind, take several deep breaths, and focus on your environment. Focus on what you see, hear, smell, and feel.

*Practicing mindfulness is a great way to find calm.  
For additional calming techniques, watch this short video.*

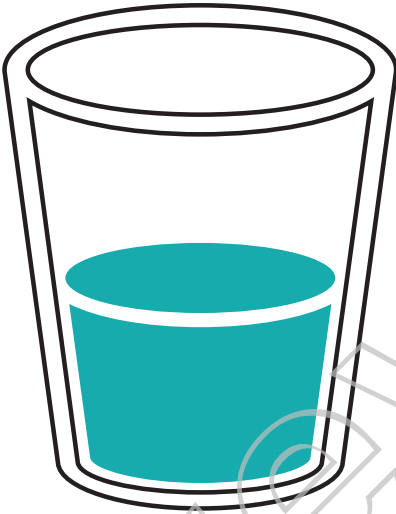


### 3. Do what “fills your cup”

Imagine your mental health and wellness as a cup. When you do what makes you feel calm and happy, your cup is full. People or situations that cause you stress and anxiety can empty your cup. To improve your mental health, focus on the people, places, and things that fill your cup.

*Write what fills and empties your cup.*

Things that fill my cup



Things that empty my cup



### 4. Take care of yourself

When you get enough sleep, eat healthy food, exercise regularly, and do things you enjoy, you're better able to cope with stress and anxiety.

Do you get enough sleep each night?  yes  sometimes  hardly ever

How healthy is your diet?  I eat healthy.  It's ok.  It's not healthy.

Are you physically active?  yes  sometimes  hardly ever

What can you do to take better care of your mind and body?

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## Focus on what you can control

When you figure out how to focus on the things you can control—and let go of the things you can't control—you will feel calmer and more at peace.

In the box, write down some things you can't control or change. In the circle, write down some things you can control. A couple of each have been done for you.

**Things I can't control**  
what other people do  
what others think

**Things I can control**  
my attitude  
how I treat others

*For more ways to improve your mental health,  
watch this short video.*



*If stress or anxiety is affecting your schoolwork or disrupting your life in other ways, confide in someone you trust and ask for help. To connect with a crisis counselor, text HOME to 741741 or dial 988 to reach the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.*