
ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION

When we use the words anxiety and depression to describe our experience, it can be helpful to clarify what we mean, especially when considering mental health treatments. Anxiety and depression are very natural, even helpful, human emotions. Most people will experience feeling anxious or depressed with some degree of regularity throughout the course of their lives. Often, feelings of anxiety or depression are based on situational or environmental factors and will reflect both the external factors as well as the internal processing or “meaning making” happening for an individual.

We begin to refer to anxiety and depression as disorders when an individual's experience becomes prolonged and/or symptoms begin to impede a person's activities of daily living. In these cases, the situational or environmental factors may continue to have an impact; however, changing the environmental circumstances will not be enough to eliminate symptoms. When an individual is identified as having an anxiety or depressive disorder, it is important for that person to receive professional mental health care and potentially medication intervention to stabilize mood and eliminate symptoms.

The reason we talk about anxiety and depression together is because there is high “comorbidity” between them. That means that most people who have anxiety disorders also experience depression and most people with depressive disorders also experience significant anxiety. It is also helpful to understand that there are underlying physiological explanations for anxiety and depression that can be rooted in anything from hormonal imbalance to food sensitivities, to unresolved trauma, and more. These issues are no more a person's “fault” than any other disorder in the body; however, there are options for treatment and recovery that require identification and action steps.

IDENTIFICATION

It is important to note that only a licensed mental health professional is qualified to provide an official diagnosis for an anxiety or depressive disorder. If you believe that you or someone you know may meet the criteria, the first step should always be an evaluation with a licensed mental health professional.

The following information is intended to provide basic information about anxiety and depression and is not a substitute for mental health care.

SYMPTOMS OF ANXIETY

Anxiety, at best, provides our body with adequate energy and motivation to avoid danger, move toward progress, and pay attention to important information in our environment. Some amount of anxiety is necessary in our experience and too much or too little can create difficulties in our “activities of daily living (ADL).” ADLs are a part of what therapists and other mental health

professionals assess to determine criteria for different mental health concerns. They include things like sleep, energy levels, eating habits, social interaction, movement to and from different environments, etc.

When the following experiences persist over a long period of time or begin to significantly hinder ADLs, that may be the point at which an individual meets criteria for an anxiety disorder. Here are a few things to pay attention to:

- Feeling nervous, anxious or on edge
- Not being able to stop or control worrying
- Worrying too much about different things
- Trouble relaxing or settling the body
- Being so restless it's hard to sit still
- Becoming easily annoyed or irritable
- Feeling afraid, as if something awful might happen

If you notice any of these experiences in yourself or someone you know, persisting longer than one day or more than twice a week, we recommend talking with a licensed mental health professional about those experiences. Don't wait until things feel unmanageable; getting help sooner than later is always a good idea.

SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION

Depressed feelings are common to our experience as humans and generally signal a need that is going unmet or an environmental or internal experience that is overwhelming the nervous system. Paying attention to a depressed mood can help us make important environmental changes to shift our state. When a depressed mood persists for a longer period, it seems less specific to a particular issue in a person's environment, and begins to interfere with ADLs, it is important for that person to be assessed by a licensed mental health professional.

Here are some things to look for in yourself or others:

- Persistent feelings of hopelessness
- Losing interest in things and activities you used to find enjoyable or life-giving
- Persistent feelings of helplessness
- Feeling blue, down, and/or dejected with little change
- Losing the feeling of "looking forward" to things
- Persistent feelings of being trapped with no options
- Feeling a loss of control over your life and future
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Loss of positive feeling, no matter where you are

Again, it is a common experience to have days or even a few days in a row of low mood especially when a situation or circumstance brings sadness, grief, anger, or pain of some kind. Pay attention to how long the feelings persist and if they begin to feel pervasive, despite changes in your environment. If you or someone you know seems to fit this criteria, it is important that they are assessed by a licensed mental health professional as soon as possible.

If you find that you may meet criteria for an anxiety or depressive disorder, you might have a range of responses from feeling relieved to have names and answers for your experience, to fear or sadness at the recognition of your struggle. Regardless, we highly recommend that you share your discovery with a trusted friend, colleague, or leader; someone who can provide the simple support of knowing where you are. The next step is to find a licensed mental health professional who can provide you with recommendations for treatment to begin to help you shift your experience.

If you are a friend, colleague, or leader who is identifying these qualities in another, there are a few things you can keep in mind to support and be helpful. First, be aware that supporting someone with anxiety and/or depression can be difficult. Be sure that you are receiving support for yourself before you attempt to help someone else.

**Also remember, you do not have to have answers.
Your presence is the most powerful tool you have.**

In addition, here are a few things to keep in mind:

Treat the person with dignity and respect

Everyone's experience of anxiety and depression is different and there is no one formula for recovery. Listening without judgment and responding with statements like "that sounds really hard" or "I am so sorry that is happening to you" are more helpful than suggestions for change or advice giving. You can leave that to the professionals working with the person.

Offer consistent emotional support and understanding

Be clear about what you can offer in terms of emotional support and be sure to follow through. If you notice the burden becoming too great, talk to others in your community or social circle about assisting you in supporting the person in need.

Assess for risk of harm

If there are signs that a person may be taking increased risks or thinking about suicide, it is always ok to ask about it. If someone discloses thoughts of suicide and tells you they have a plan for how they will complete suicide, it is always ok to seek emergency medical help for immediate danger. At the very least, assist the person with seeking out supportive options.

Provide practical help

Does the person need assistance with rides, getting groceries, sharing their struggle with their loved ones, or making phone calls to get help? Do what you can to provide for these concrete needs.

Avoid toxic positivity. Use genuine compassion instead

Toxic Positivity sounds like:

"Look on the bright side, ____"

“At least you aren’t _____”

“It could be worse.”

“Just think positively, don’t be so negative.”

“You wouldn’t be so sad if you just prayed more.”

“Everything is going to be fine, don’t worry.”

“It’s just in your head, try _[insert advice]_.”

Genuine Compassion sounds like

“I see how hard you are trying.”

“I am here with you; I won’t leave you alone.”

“This is really painful; I am sorry you’re going through this.”

“Thank you for being honest with me; I hear you.”

“That sounds really complicated. Is there more?”

“I can feel that statement in my _[name part of your body where you feel it]_.”

“What you are saying makes sense.”

Remember, we are never intended to do life alone, especially not when it gets painful.

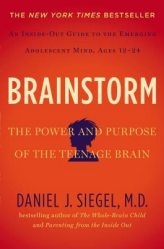

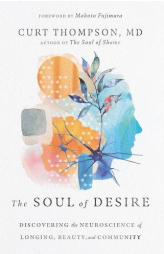
Whether it is you or another person who is experiencing the pain of anxiety or depression, be sure you are talking openly and honestly with a trusted other about where you are and what you need.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

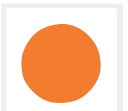
- National Suicide Prevention Hotline: [1-800-273-8255](tel:1-800-273-8255)
- Trans Lifeline: [1-877-565-8860](tel:1-877-565-8860) (for the transgender community)
- Trevor Lifeline: [1-866-488-7386](tel:1-866-488-7386) (for LGBTQ+ youth)
- Crisis Text Line: Text “Hello” to [741741](tel:741741)







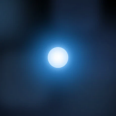
Young Life Crisis Line for Leaders: [1-800-999-8661](tel:1-800-999-8661)

BOOKS:


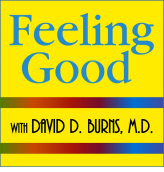
 <p>THE NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER A PARENTS' GUIDE TO THE EMERGING ADOLESCENT MIND, AGES 12-18 BRAINSTORM THE POWER AND PURPOSE OF THE TEENAGE BRAIN DANIEL J. SIEGEL, M.D. bestselling author of The Whole-Brain Child and No-Drama Discipline</p>	<p>Brainstorm: The Power and Purpose of the Teenage Brain. By Daniel Siegel, MD</p>
 <p>CURT THOMPSON, MD AUTHOR OF THE SOUL OF SHAME THE SOUL OF SHAME RETELLING THE STORIES WE BELIEVE ABOUT OURSELVES</p>	<p>The Soul of Shame: Retelling the Stories we Believe about Ourselves, by Curt Thompson, MD</p>
 <p>FOREWORD BY Malina Fajman CURT THOMPSON, MD AUTHOR OF THE SOUL OF SHAME The SOUL of DESIRE DISCOVERING the NEUROSCIENCE of LONGING, BEAUTY, and COMMUNITY</p>	<p>The Soul of Desire: Discovering the Neuroscience of Longing, Beauty, and Community, by Curt Thompson, MD</p>

APPS:

	<p>Headspace meditation, sleep casts, stress reduction</p>
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	Smiling Mind meditation for adults and children
	Calm masterclasses, sleep stories, affirmations
	What's Up? based in cognitive behavioral therapy, track moods, guided exercises, inspiration
	Sanvello identify behavior patterns, track goals, track progress
	MoodTools depression questionnaire, track mood, info videos
	Breathe2Relax teaches diaphragmatic breathing
	Panic Relief soothe during a panic attack

PODCASTS:

	Being Known Podcast with Dr. Curt Thompson
	Feeling Good Podcast by Dr. David Burns



[In the Light Podcast with Dr. Anita Phillips](#)



[The Allender Center Podcast with Dr. Dan Allender](#)



[The Faith & Mental Wellness Podcast with Brittany Moses](#)