A shadow of a hand is cast onto a dark window pane on the left side of the image. The hand is positioned as if reaching out or holding the pane.

What You Need To Know About Anxiety & Panic Attacks

About Jackie Massey

Jackie Massey is an entrepreneur, wife, mother, and foster parent to children and adults with special medical needs.



Her life path has taken her through many twists and turns and ups and downs. Throughout her life, she has had to continually evolve and find her new path. She has experienced many things in her life including being a single parent, domestic violence, divorce, financial problems, anxiety and depression, and juggling a career and a blended family, all while living with chronic health issues.

These challenges had forced her to completely change the direction of her life, multiple times, taking a leave of absence from her full-time career, starting a home business while finding a new path, and learning how to cope and live with her new circumstances.

“Living with pain day in, day out, trying to raise a family and hold down a full-time job out of the house was probably the most difficult time in my life. Then it all came crashing down and I had to learn to live my life in a way I had never planned.”

Jackie Massey

Her professional education has continued throughout her life as she is committed to lifelong learning and believes in embracing obstacles as opportunities.

She holds certifications in Applied Counselling with an additional specialization in Addictions, Business Management and Entrepreneurship, as well as Information Management and Technology.

She was a volunteer working crisis phone lines and running a weekly group for women who were working through addictions and trauma in their lives.

Through her pathfinding journey, Jackie has combined her personal experiences and development with her research on self-improvement and has created e-reports, workbooks and articles to help others design and improve their lives.

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Anxiety Issues: Is It Every Day Worry or Something More?

Do you ever find yourself worrying about everything in your life? From work to personal relationships, and even everyday essential tasks? Maybe you have even wondered if it's something more than just typical worrying.

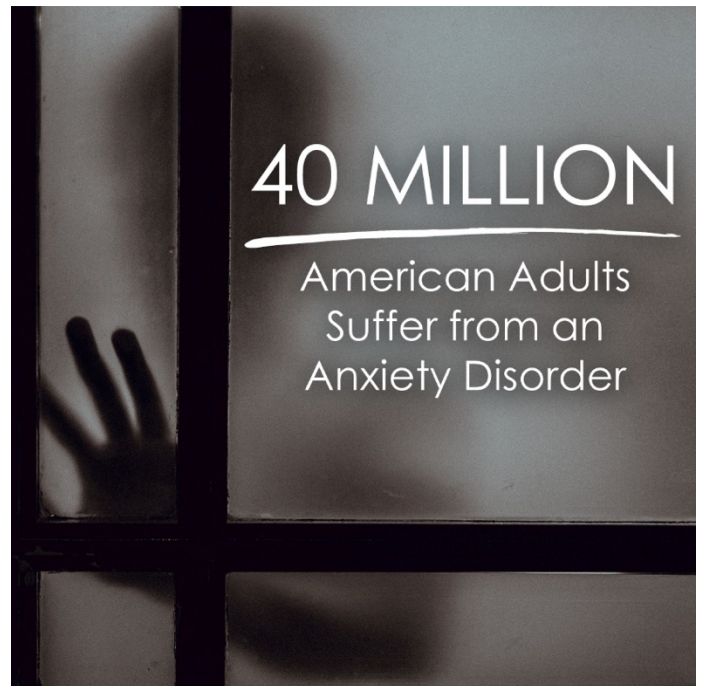
If you find yourself constantly worrying in your everyday life you may be suffering from an anxiety disorder. According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, about 40 million adults suffer from anxiety disorder. It's so prevalent that it's the most common mental illness in the United States and Canada.

Although anxiety is highly treatable, less than half of those suffering don't receive treatment. This may be because they do not realize how serious the situation is or they believe they are exaggerating their symptoms and prefer to deal with it alone. Nevertheless, it's very important to reach out to a professional if you find yourself suffering extensive constant symptoms of an anxiety disorder.

There are many anxiety disorders but the most common anxiety disorder is called Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD). About 7 million adults in America suffer from GAD. Worrying is much different than suffering from Generalized Anxiety Disorder.

Every day worry is very normal even if it is irritating to feel worried. It usually doesn't affect your ability to get things done. Everyone has deadlines, bills that need to be paid, and things in life that cause them concern. These things might even keep them up all night on occasion. But, the difference between the two depends on how exactly it affects your life and your ability to live your life.

Those who suffer from GAD are typically always on edge, irritable, suffer from insomnia and their worrying is so chronic that it affects their work and social life. It can even badly affect their lives when they are alone. People who suffer from GAD might not show up



to work altogether and may not even leave their house. The following are typical signs that you may have a general anxiety disorder.

Have Chronic Insomnia or Bad Sleep Patterns

People who suffer from GAD have problems getting to sleep and staying to sleep. They constantly find themselves worrying about an array of problems or no specific problems at all while trying to sleep. These worries play over and over in their brain until it's time to get to work. You may feel as if you have a thousand butterflies in their stomach and there may be no actual reason for it to happen.

Experience Panic Attacks

Panic attacks are random episodes when one feels fear and helplessness for several minutes.

Typically, panic attacks come with physical symptoms of a fast heartbeat, sweating, lightheadedness and even chest pain.

Some people who have anxiety disorders may suffer from repeated panic attacks. Many times, the first time they think they're having a heart attack.

Suffer from Flashbacks

Replaying events in your head repeatedly. Seeing flashbacks of a traumatic event that causes you to stop what you're doing or not want to try it again. Sometimes it's remunerating over an unpleasant experience in your memory, even something as simple as messing up during a speech or saying the wrong thing to a friend can bring on this problem.

But often it's more serious such as what can happen if you're a victim of a violent crime or war. Experiencing traumatic flashbacks is commonly known as post-traumatic stress disorder and is also an anxiety disorder.



Being a Perfectionist or Performing Compulsive Behaviors

Suffering from obsessive-compulsive disorder or always trying to reach perfectionism is linked to anxiety disorders. If you are constantly worried about every little thing you do, notice every little mistake, and continually self-doubt and second-guess yourself and have trouble finishing things because it's not "perfect", you may have GAD. These mistakes and self-doubt are then replayed in your brain over and over.

Pain

Chest pain, headaches, stomach pain, and random unexplained pain are common when suffering from an anxiety disorder due to stress. Many people even suffer actual physical symptoms of a digestive disorder like sudden stomach pain and diarrhea at an inopportune time.

If you suffer from these common symptoms it's important to reach out and get help. Anxiety disorders are highly treatable through therapy and/or medication. You don't have to keep feeling this way.

Journal Your Thoughts

1. What do you find yourself worrying about?
2. Do you find that you suffer from any of these signs? If so which ones?
3. How do you feel when you are worrying about something and how do you cope with it?

What Is a Panic Attack Like?

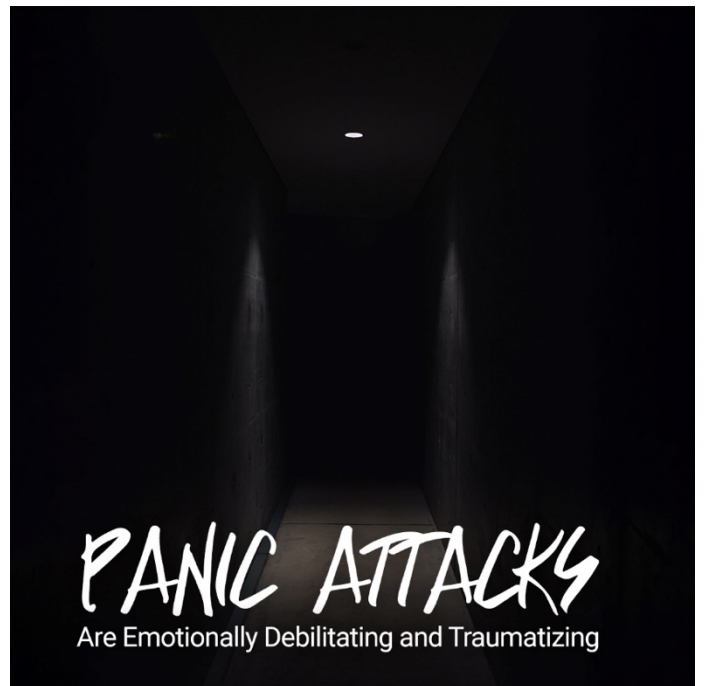
According to the National Institute of Mental Health, over four million Americans suffer from panic attacks.

Panic attacks are random debilitating episodes where one suffers from intense feelings of terror or anxiety.

These episodes can last several minutes and can come along with many other symptoms including but not limited to:

- Rapid or pounding heartbeat
- Heart palpitations
- Sweating
- Shaking
- Shortness of breath
- Hot flashes
- Lightheadedness or dizziness
- The sense of impending doom
- Chills
- Nausea
- Abdominal pain
- Chest pain
- A headache
- Numbness or tingling in the hands, feet or face
- Flushed face
- Sweaty palms

Panic attacks are emotionally debilitating and traumatizing. During a panic attack, the sufferer feels as if something bad is going to happen to them at this very moment and may even feel as though they are going to die.





Panic attacks are commonly mistaken for heart attacks due to intense chest pain. Many who suffer from their first panic attack find themselves in the emergency room. A panic attack is basically the body's fight-or-flight response going off even though the threat is irrational.

For some, panic attacks come out of nowhere and have no known cause. Some researchers believe that genetics can play a role as it's common for those who have family members who suffer from panic attacks to have panic attacks as well.

For others, traumatic events or certain situations can set off panic attacks. Such as being attacked violently, being robbed, or going to war. But it may be something as mild going to public events or just leaving the house in general. Panic attacks can also stem from stress and anxiety disorders.

After the panic attack has passed; depression, helplessness, and shame can overcome sufferers. The fear of having a panic attack again can cause them to avoid certain situations altogether; disrupting their normal life, work, and relationships. It's common to experience intense fatigue and be emotionally drained after a panic attack as well.

If you find yourself suffering from more than one panic attack throughout your day, week or month it is important to seek the care of a doctor. They can help treat your panic attacks through therapy and possibly with some medication. Though seeking a doctor is the most important thing to do, there are things you can do now to help when you notice a panic attack coming on.

First, you must acknowledge the fact that you are having a panic attack and you are not going to die. Of course, this is easier said than done but panic attacks are usually irrational and you are unlikely to die.

Second, move to an area that is familiar and comfortable. And lastly try to adjust your breathing by slowing it down. Combine these three tips to help your body get through the attack faster.

Journal Your Thoughts

1. Have you ever experienced a panic attack? If so, what do you remember?
2. What are things you can personally do to help ease the symptoms of a panic attack?
3. Have you ever experienced a time when a friend or family member had a panic attack? How was the experience? If not, how would you help?

When and How to Get Help for Anxiety

The Anxiety and Depression Association of America has reported that only about a third of those who suffer from anxiety disorders get proper treatment. This could be due to many factors including not knowing when and how to seek help. Noticing signs of anxiety, knowing how to seek help, and getting the help you need are key to dealing with and improving symptoms of anxiety.

When to seek help for Anxiety:

Your Work is Suffering

When your anxiety is causing you to miss multiple days of work, constantly show up late, and miss important deadlines, this is a huge sign that you need professional help with your anxiety. Difficulty completing typical work tasks such as sending out emails or showing up to meetings are also signs that your anxiety is more severe than you may realize.

Your Relationships Are Not Working

A clear sign that you may need help with your anxiety is when it affects your family, friends, and significant other relationships. Avoiding friends and family or being overly jealous and constantly worrying about your partner are common signs that anxiety is affecting your relationships. If they've ever told you that the way you are acting is affecting them, especially if more than one person has said something, consider speaking to a professional.

You Are Self Medicating

Self-medicating with drugs, alcohol, or food are clear signs that you are trying to avoid or suppress the feelings of anxiety. Certain marijuana strains, alcohol, and other drugs (and even food) may seem to suppress your feelings but can make symptoms worse later down the road. Not only that, using drugs can lead to a serious dependency causing more problems down the road and can even be life-threatening. Using food as a drug can lead to obesity and other health problems.



Worrying to The Point of Exhaustion

Are you noticing you are not getting enough sleep because the worries are constantly being replayed in your brain over and over as if they are on a repeat recording? If you worry constantly about every little thing you did, you said, or someone else did or said, and have it repeating in your head to the point you are exhausted it is a sign that your anxiety is out of control and you need to seek help.

It Prevents You from Performing Every Day Essential Tasks

If you won't leave your house for much-needed groceries, you can't get out of the bed to take a shower, or you are missing out on life in general because you feel trapped, isolated, and fearful daily this is a serious problem. Activities that you once found entertaining are no longer enjoyable is another sign that you need help.

You Experience Panic Attacks

If you experience multiple panic attacks, then it is time for you to seek help. Panic attacks can be debilitating and overwhelming leading to isolation. Panic attacks are commonly linked to anxiety disorders and can be treated. While it can be hard when you have anxiety to get the help you need; once you do it, you'll start improving fast.

How and where to seek help:



Support Groups

The Anxiety and Depression Association of America and the Anxiety Disorders Association of Canada have anonymous peer-to-peer online anxiety and depression support groups. Members can connect with others who suffer from anxiety, depression, and other related disorders as well as ask questions.

Facebook is also a great source as there are many private support groups that are there for anyone who wants to talk or see how others are coping without actually talking face-to-face with anyone.

Friends and Family

It may seem challenging to speak to friends and family about your anxiety but doing that can be a great way to work through your problems.

Friends and family are there to help as they love you and only want the best for you.

However, some of them may not really understand that you cannot just pull yourself out of it. If you find this to be an unsatisfactory way to feel better, please seek outside help, but still be open with your friends and family about your situation.

Get Therapy

Therapy is a great way to work through anxiety. There are many different types of therapies from private one on one sessions to group therapy. Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy is a common treatment that focuses on identifying, understanding, and changing your thinking and behavior patterns. CBT is best for those who want to be more active and have control of their recovery.

If you are concerned that you may have General Anxiety Disorder (even if you think it's mild), it won't hurt to seek help even though initially it is hard to take those steps. You have to realize that the anxiety will often make you think you don't really need help even when you do. They say that the healthiest people are the ones who seek help even when it's hard to do. Take that first step and reach out for that lifeline and you won't regret it.

Support Lines

If you find yourself in crisis or are suicidal, call the Suicide Prevention telephone numbers in your area to get help.

Journal Your Thoughts

1. Do you believe anxiety is ruining your relationship with friends and family? Why do you believe this to be true and how can you help fix it?
2. Are you involved in any support groups? Join some now and describe your experiences.
3. What kind of help would you like to receive for your anxiety? Once you identify it make a plan of action to get there.

Talking About Anxiety Issues with Loved Ones

Talking to your loved ones about anxiety can be scary and overwhelming but it doesn't have to be impossible if you take the right steps.

First, you must acknowledge that your friends and family want you to be happy and healthy and that due to your anxiety you have irrational fears that are preventing you from speaking up. Talking to loved ones is essential when it comes to coping with and reducing your symptoms of anxiety.

Here are five tips for talking to loved ones about Anxiety:

Be Prepared

Be prepared for your loved ones to not understand right away or be more worried than normal. They only want the best for you. Some people react differently and may seem to belittle your symptoms but that's only because they either do not understand fully or they want to make it seem like it is less than it is, as a coping mechanism for themselves.

How your loved one reacts may be what is preventing you from starting a conversation in the first place, but know their reactions and actions afterward are important even if you never confront them.

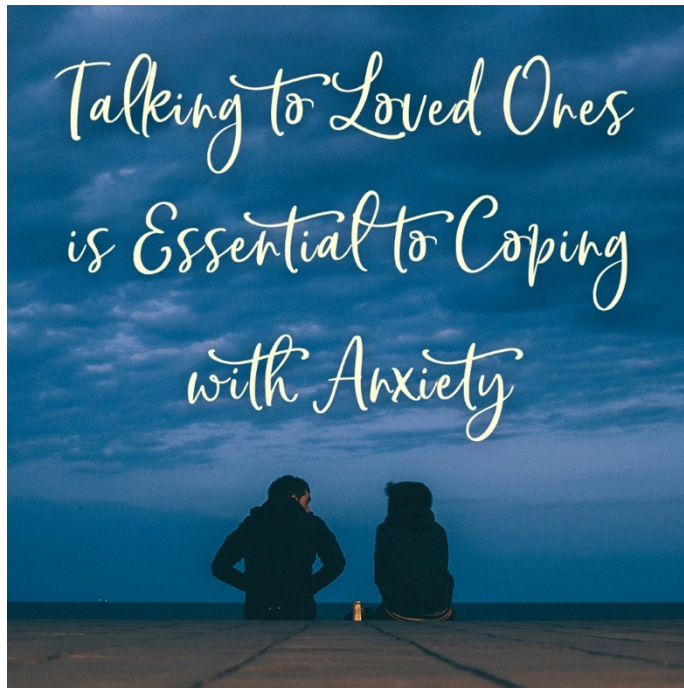
Prepare a list of information you want to talk to your loved ones about and choose a time that is best for you when you are feeling the most positive. Choose a time and place with your loved ones that is comfortable and familiar for you both.



Identify Why and How

Identify why you want to speak to your loved ones about your anxiety and how it will help. This way you know you are speaking up only because you feel as though you need to and not because others are saying it is good to do. Although they are typically right, it only works if you are ready and know the reasons to why and how it will help.

Identifying the why and how also helps you to start and lead the conversation. For example, "Mom, I have an anxiety disorder, I am getting help for this problem, this is the reason I have been acting in the manner I have. I need for you to help me by supporting me through my treatment." By being up front, and not asking permission, you are more likely to get the support you need.



Give Them Time to Understand

Again, everyone reacts to certain things in their own way. At first, they may not understand, but give them time. Ultimately, they will come around because they love you. Don't allow yourself to give in to your anxiety during this moment. They just learned something new and need the time to truly understand.

Let Them Ask Questions

Loved ones are going to be curious about your anxiety and will want to know more. Let them ask questions and try not to be offended. Everyone learns differently and though some of their questions may seem insensitive they are only trying to learn and truly understand. Give them the answers they need and the time to absorb the information. You can even ask them questions to see where they are with their understanding and to enable you to educate them more.

Educate Them

Give your loved ones material about your anxiety disorder so that they can truly understand what you are going through. Any information you can provide them is beneficial especially if it comes from a professional or well-respected organization. The Anxiety and Depression Association of America and the Anxiety Disorders Association of Canada have plenty of resources to help you and your family.

Use these tips to start a conversation with your loved ones about your anxiety issues. No one needs to suffer alone, and they are there to help you, encourage you, and keep you healthy and happy. Don't let your anxiety issues prevent you from having relationships as these people love you and want to help.

Journal Your Thoughts

1. What is holding you back from speaking with your loved ones about your anxiety?
2. Why do you want to speak to loved ones about your anxiety and how do you believe it will help?
3. Choose one person you trust and write a letter to them about your anxiety. Include as much detail as you can including how you feel and why you chose them.

Tips for Managing Anxiety

Living with anxiety or anxiety disorders can be challenging and exhausting but luckily the symptoms that commonly come with it can be managed with just a little bit of preparation and knowledge. If you suffer from anxiety it is always a good idea to educate yourself as much as possible. The more you know about your anxiety the more likely you can help control or recover from it.

The following are a few tips to help manage your anxiety regardless of the situations that make you feel anxious:

Eat a Healthy Diet

Studies have shown that an improper diet can lead to anxiety or aggravate it as well as affect your mood and energy levels.

Eat a well-balanced diet and don't skip any meals.

Avoid alcohol and caffeine as they are known as anxiety triggers.

Diets low in iron, vitamin D, and B can also trigger anxiety. Schedule a blood test to make sure all your vitamins are in the right levels and to see where you need to adjust your diet or if you need supplements.

Get Enough Sleep and Exercise

The Anxiety and Depression Association of America recommends getting at least 8 hours of sleep or more each night and to exercise daily. Inadequate sleep can lead to worsening symptoms of anxiety and exercise boosts serotonin in the brain to help make you feel good. Not only that, proper sleep and exercise will lead to feeling more productive and a better overall quality of life.

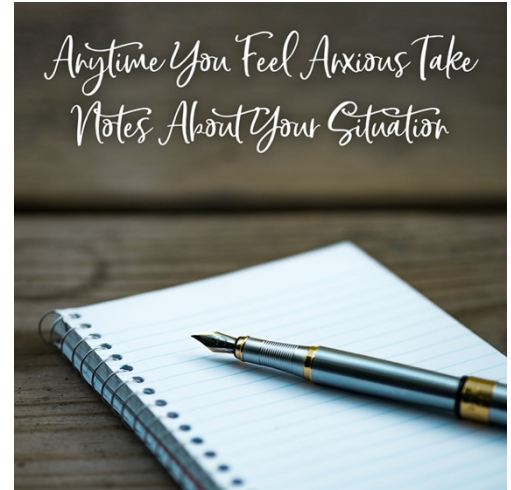
Accept That You Can't Control Everything

As humans, there are simply things that are out of our control. We cannot control the people around us or the atmosphere around us. When you are feeling anxious, or you know you are about to attend an event or do something that fills you with anxiety keep this in mind. Just because you can't control everything around you doesn't mean things won't go your way or be okay.



Learn Your Triggers

Anytime you feel anxious take notes about your situation. Where are you and what just happened to make you feel this way? Although not everyone will have a pattern some people may, and it can be very beneficial to know what it is. This way you can either avoid the situations if they are not important to you or you can make a plan ahead of time before doing it again.



Prove Your Anxiety Wrong

Anxiety is an irrational fear. More times than not when you are feeling anxious nothing bad is going to happen. Test your anxiety when you notice you are feeling anxious. Ask yourself what you are feeling anxious about and then prove it wrong by showing yourself why it is wrong by doing the thing anyway.

How to Act During Anxious Times

If you are noticing that you are feeling anxious get to a place that is comfortable and familiar. Then take a moment to control your breathing. You may even want to count to ten and tell yourself that you are okay. Finding a loved one or friend to talk to during this moment is beneficial as well because they can distract you and try to put your mind at ease.

Use these tips throughout your daily life to help control your anxiety. Although these are great tips to help you cope with anxiety it is always important to seek the advice of a physician. Anxiety is highly treatable and can be crippling without proper care.

Journal Your Thoughts

1. Are there areas in your life that you believe are causing you more anxiety? How do you believe you can fix this?
2. What are situations you can control and can't control?
3. Take a moment to list common situations that cause you anxiety. Then write out a reason why your anxiety is wrong.