

Action Guide

Natural Approaches to Manage Anxiety

1. **Vitamins and supplements:** See a medical provider for lab tests to determine if you are deficient in any vital nutrients. Work with your medical provider to find the right supplements, dosage and quality to meet your nutritional needs.
2. **Cut the caffeine and sugar:** As difficult as it may seem to cut out caffeine and drastically decrease your sugar intake, doing so will make a big difference in your symptoms. Ask your medical provider or nutritionist to help you develop a plan to stop using caffeine and decrease your sugar intake. There are many alternative sweeteners, but some are worse for you than sugar, ie Splenda. Ask about Stevia and others that have no harmful side effects.
3. **Stress management:** Many anxiety symptoms are self-inflicted. Over-scheduling, clutter, making promises that are near impossible to keep and poor boundaries are among the culprits. Take a look at your priorities and get control of your schedule and life.
4. **Learn to say 'no'.** This will help with some of the issues in the previous bullet point. If you need it, take an assertiveness class. Many of us are people-pleasers and we pay the price for it. Don't be a slave to your kids and spouse/partner, your boss and friends.

5. **Self-care:** People who have trouble saying ‘no’ or being assertive often place others’ needs before their own. Mothers are usually at the top of the list for poor self care. Try to remember that if you don’t take care of yourself, you will be less effective as a parent, spouse/partner, employee and friend.
6. **Exercise:** Exercise is a great stress reducer. 30 minutes or more 3-5 times per week will improve your health and decrease your anxiety – it also helps with sleep problems.
7. **Clean up your diet:** The connection between nutrition and mental health is critical. You may need to begin with supplements to get back on track, but if you eat more fruits and veggies, you will begin to get the nutrients you require for good health and mental health with less supplements. Fast food and restaurant eating should be avoided most of the time, and chosen carefully if you decide to indulge. Explore food allergies or sensitivities – it can make a huge difference.
8. **Stop the feedback loop:** Most people with anxiety have a barrage of worried, anxious, critical and/or intrusive thoughts running through their minds endlessly. These thoughts create much of the distress we experience. Learn ways to manage these thoughts. Once you get the underlying causes of anxiety under control, this may get easier.
9. **Mindfulness:** Mindfulness is about living in the present moment. It has been found to be very helpful in managing anxiety, including OCD and PTSD. Take a class, find an online audio or video or work with me to learn this useful tool.
10. **Deep breathing and relaxation:** People with anxiety often take shallow, quick breaths from the top of their chests. This type of breathing can worsen anxiety symptoms, leading to hyperventilation. Learn to take deep, belly breaths to calm yourself and to breathe slower. Call me, take a class or find an online resource to help you with this.

(Adapted From: Pierce, L. (2013). Natural Approaches: Anxiety Disorders. Theravive.)