

HOW TO DEAL WITH ANXIETY DISORDERS

By Preston T. Bailey, PhD., D.Min.

MEANING OF ANXIETY:

- Anxiety is a sense of being out of control instead of letting God be in control who is sovereign
- Anxiety is a fear of the unknown instead of trusting in God who knows everything
- Anxiety is a dread of bad things that might happen instead of preparing for the worst and hoping for the best
- Anxiety is an assumption that bad things could occur instead of living by faith through prayer
- Anxiety is a sense of uncertainty, tension, or uneasiness about a future event but not certain of what the specific thing you fear
- Anxiety is an uncomfortable feeling of dread characterized by nervousness, tension and apprehension.
- Anxiety is a defense mechanism to cope with stress or uncomfortable circumstances
- Anxiety occurs when a person becomes afraid to look at a negative emotion inside
- Anxiety is an adaptive feeling experienced by all humans to something unpleasant and generally leads to some action to relieve the feeling.
- Anxiety that is free-floating is a term used to describe a lack of focus on a specific target unlike a fear that develops in reaction to a specific real or imagined danger that has no obvious cause of which the person is aware.
- An exaggerated state of anxiety resulting in a profound disturbance in one's ability to function is called panic.

ANXIETY ATTACKS

By Dr. Preston T. Bailey, Jr.

20-30 million Americans have anxiety attacks. About 10% of the population has this disorder. This is the nation's number one mental health problem for women and number two for men. The disorder is strikingly different from other types of anxiety in that panic attacks are so sudden, appear to be unprovoked, and are often disabling. Once someone has had a panic attack--for example, while driving, shopping in a crowded store, or riding in an elevator-- he or she may develop irrational fears, called phobias, about these situations and begin to avoid them. Eventually, the pattern of avoidance and level of anxiety about another attack may reach the point where the individual with panic disorder may be unable to drive or even step out of the house. At this stage, the person is said to have panic disorder with agoraphobia.

Fear is a healthy response to impending danger or harm. It is called the "Fight or Flight Response." Anxiety is a constant high level of tension over something that may or may not happen. It is a real or imagined threat. When a "*perceived threat*" materializes, then a person responds to that threat based on their past experiences and not just that event alone. When anxiety-provoking experiences accumulate, then it develops into an anxiety disorder. Panic is fear or anxiety that is out of control. A condition develops in which a person has a strong urge to avoid or run away from uncomfortable situations and often-physical symptoms appear. When an anxiety attack occurs, then one has an emotional overload in which a person has difficulty recognizing and dealing with one's own feelings. These feelings may have been ignored or denied in the past in various ways. Three factors that affect your response to anxiety are childhood memories, birth order, genetic predispositions, and temperament type.

HOW TO DEAL WITH ANXIETY:

When you are anxious, you should get your mind off of what you are worrying about and channel that energy into something constructive. This is a list of possible things you can do.

1. Recognize your honest feelings and express them to someone in an appropriate manner.
2. Confront your fears by determining exactly what specific fear you have. What is the worst thing that could happen if this fear really happened? Is this fear real or imagined?
3. When anxiety starts to surface, stop and ask yourself, "What negative thoughts am I thinking?" Then see the circumstance from a positive perception.
4. What do you believe about this event? What does the Bible teach about our proper response to this? Separate facts and feelings.
5. Write down your feelings concerning what happened in a diary or a notebook.
6. Plan how you will respond step-by-step if an anxiety attack occurs. Make a list of 10 things you can do when you become anxious and start with item #1.
7. Take time to relax and do something that you enjoy. It is all right to relax. Breathe deeply and slowly and practice relaxation exercises.
8. When anxiety starts to build, read your Bible and pray.
9. Find a constructive outlet for your stress through regular exercise. Get adequate sleep and develop proper nutrition.
10. Talk to a trusted friend who will listen when you are anxious.
11. Establish healthy relationships and avoid unhealthy ones.
12. Do not focus on past mistakes or hurts. You can learn from the past but not change it. Focus on positive improvements you can make in the future.

DEALING WITH STRESS

I. DEFINITION OF STRESS

Stress is a physical, mental, or emotional tension or strain. What is stress for one person is a source of relaxation for another. Stress is the body's physical response to a demand made on it. Some stress is good for us. It can motivate and challenge us. When our stress level gets out of balance, we begin to suffer the physical and emotional effects of stress. Stress is often what leads up to anxiety.

CAUSES OF STRESS:

Perfectionism:

A need for Control

People Pleasing

A need to appear overly competent

Unrealistic expectations

Failure to plan and prepare

HOW TO COPE WITH ANXIETY DISORDERS

This is a list of some things you can do to avoid or reduce stress.

1. Get a complete physical checkup. Luke was a physician. Only take medicine when advised by a physician. Avoid the use of alcohol, drugs, etc. I Timothy 5:23

2. Start an exercise program at least 3 times a week for 20 minutes. Jesus walked daily. I Corinthians 9:27
3. Accept the fact that everyone has stress. Change your attitude about stressful or anxiety producing situations. Phil.4:11; Lk.9:23; Hebs.13:5, Hebrews 12:6-7
4. Find a friend or counselor to talk with about your problems. James 5:16; Proverbs 11:14, 15:22, 24:6
5. Develop a constructive outlet for your stress. Eph.4:15; 1 Corinthians 9:27
Tension or stress repressed inward can result in sickness.
6. Have a specific procedure for dealing with problems that arise.
Prepare for the worst and hope for the best. Proverbs 2:9-12
7. Work at maintaining a balanced lifestyle and eat properly. II Timothy 1:7
8. Renew your mind with Scripture. Romans 12:1-2, Psalms 1:2 Cor.10:5
9. Have several hobbies or activities to participate in when anxiety or depression starts to set in. Paul made tents. Make a list of 10 things that you will do whenever you start to get depressed.
10. Get adequate rest and sleep. Matthew 11:28-29
11. Plan daily activities ahead of time and try to stick to your schedule even though you may not FEEL like it. Galatians 5:24; James 1:22; Proverbs 6:6-8
12. Join a social group or plan activities involving other people. Participate in planned recreation activities. Galatians 6:2
13. Set aside time daily for prayer, Bible Study, and Scripture memory. II Timothy 2:15, Ps.119:11
14. Attend church every week unless physically ill. Hebrews 10:25; I Corinthians 16:1-2
15. Participate in some ministry where you can help others. Ephesians 4:12-14, Romans 12, 2 Timothy 2:2
16. Resolve anger in relationships before the sun goes down. Ephesians 4:26; Matthew 5:23-24
17. Confront your fears in an appropriate manner with courage and strength. Proverbs 3:25; Psalm 27:1
18. Set high enough standards for your habits and behavior. Set limits for your life and learn to be assertive. Try to limit major changes in your life over a 2-year period to reduce stress. Psalm 119:105; I Timothy 4:8; II Peter 1:6-7; Eccl 12:12
Prov. 4:14-15
19. Set realistic expectations for yourself and those around you and look at the positive aspect of circumstances. Philippians 4:8; Proverbs 3:8-9
20. Avoid any substances that you may be allergic to such as corn, wheat, eggs, tomatoes, citrus, or chocolate.
21. Establish specific priorities of things to do for the day by writing them down and placing a number of importance next to them with "1" being the most important and "10" being the least important.
Delegate to others what others can do.
22. Try to limit major changes in your life over a 2-year period to reduce stress.
23. Develop a sense of humor. Proverbs 15:13, Proverbs 17:22
24. Learn to forgive. Matthew 6:12, 14, 15
25. Do not dwell on the past but set goals for the future and work towards them. Philippians 3:13-14; Romans 12:1-2
26. Trust in the Lord to help you with problems that you cannot solve by yourself. Stop trying to control everyone and everything! Proverbs 3:5-6
27. Get up and do something constructive. Jms.1:22
28. Stop assuming what others think and do and simply ask. James 4:3

People often assume the other person's perception of an event, what mood the other person is in, how another person feels, the meaning of the words people use, another person's values (how important something is on a scale of 1 to 10), others motives, the meaning of their body language or tone of voice, how you think others will respond before you have given them a chance, and their personal preferences.

CONCLUSION:

God has recorded in the Bible a whole chapter that deals with anxiety. The Greek word for anxiety means “a divided mind.” This refers to thinking pessimistic one minute and optimistic the next minute. So every time you feel anxious, read these Scripture verses again, but most of all, do what they say.

Phil 4:4-13 says:

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things. 9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me — put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. 10 I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. 11 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength. NIV

So when you read verse 4, then stop and out loud say “I rejoiced because I have two hands and arms to praise your name or whatever you want to thank the Lord about. Then stop at each verse and do exactly what it says. Over time, you will begin to become less and less anxious. Praise the Lord!