**20 Anxiety Busters**

You can read all the anti-[anxiety](https://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/anxiety)advice in the world, but none of this matters unless you take action. To feel more relaxed, to [sleep](https://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/sleep) soundly at night, and to put energy into what matters, you have to stop wasting time on tasks that don't matter.

By the end of this article, your life could become infinitely more productive and Zen-like. Your part is to commit to 15-60 minutes per day and tackle a few of the following 22 anxiety busters below.

The more you commit, the better you'll feel.

You're probably familiar with some of these anxiety strategies. But if you experience racing thoughts, tightening in your chest, and shortness of breath, you haven't done all of them.

**Anxiety Buster #1: Start Deep-Breathing**

If you're not focused on how to calm your body through slow, intentional belly-breathing, you're missing out. Belly-breathing is free, location independent, and easy to implement.

1. Sit with your eyes closed and turn your attention to your breathing. Breathe naturally, preferably through the nostrils, without attempting to control your breath.

2. Be aware of the sensation of the breath as it enters and leaves the nostrils. Place one hand on your belly, and the other on your chest. Take a deep breath for a count of four. Hold your breath for a count of three. Exhale for a count of four. The hand on your belly should go in as you inhale, and move out as you exhale.

3. Concentrate on your breath and forget everything else. Your mind will be very busy, and you may even feel that the [meditation](https://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/meditation) is making your mind busier, but the reality is you're just becoming more aware of how busy your mind is.

4. Resist the temptation to follow the different thoughts as they arise, and focus on the sensation of the breath. If you discover that your mind has wandered and is following your thoughts, immediately return it to the breath.

5. Repeat this as many times as necessary until your mind settles on the breath.  
Don't wait to begin belly-breathing. The sooner you make this a daily habit, the quicker you'll feel relaxed.

When you implement belly-breathing, you start the day in a here-and-now state. Better yet, you're not wasting time worrying about the future, or reliving the past.

**Anxiety Buster #2: Meditate instead of Medicate**

Calm is an i[nside job](https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/anxiety-zen/201404/how-get-anxiety-zen" \t "_blank). Give yourself the gift of serenity and start the day with ten minutes of solitude and positive energy. Think calm, measured and open-minded, and your daily activities will correspond. Sign up for a Yoga class or download a yoga video from YouTube.

**Anxiety Buster #3: Practice Self-Care**

Get a massage, a mani-pedi, or a haircut. Nothing says polished and well-maintained like a sexy, healthy glow.

If money is tight, look for a discount salon or a training school which offers quality services for people on a budget. So they don't serve peppermint tea on a silver tray -- close your eyes and imagine that five-star service while you take in the pampering you deserve.

Also learn to say no...Not all stressors are within your control, but some are.Take control over the parts of your life that you can change and are causing you stress. One way to do this may be to say "no" more often. This is especially true if you find yourself taking on more than you can handle, as juggling many responsibilities can leave you feeling overwhelmed. Being selective about what you take on — and saying no to what will unnecessarily add to your load — can be a good start to controlling your stress levels.

**Anxiety Buster #4: Eliminate Soda**

That morning jolt of joe can jumpstart your day and provide warmth and comfort, but anything with high fructose corn syrup and 177 other ingredients will not.

If you're accustomed to that 3:00 p.m. Dr. Pepper, switch it out for a soothing green tea. Not only does the [caffeine](https://www.psychologytoday.com/conditions/caffeine) jack up your central nervous system, soda depletes vitamins and minerals from your [diet](https://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/diet) and wreaks havoc on your smile. Teeth become susceptible to cavities when the acid level of your saliva falls below a certain point.

**Anxiety Buster #5: Go to Bed Early**

This may sound impossible if you're accustomed to staying up late to catch up on the To-Do list. But this one's a MUST.

Sleep deprivation is a huge anxiety culprit. Inadequate shuteye can amplify the [brain](https://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/neuroscience)'s anticipatory reactions, upping overall anxiety levels, according to research.

"We all have anticipatory anxiety," explains researcher Fugen Neziroglu. "Having moderate levels of anxiety about doing well is important. But it can be destructive when it begins to interfere with your life." It's impossible to have healthy emotional functioning without adequate sleep.

Don't burn the midnight oil in hopes of catching up on the weekends. Unused sleep minutes don't roll over.

**Anxiety Buster #6 Wake up 15 Minutes Early**

Like most anxious people, you're probably rushing around in the morning and yelling at everyone in your wake, "Hurry up! We're going to be late!"

Go slowly, and set yourself up for a relaxed day ahead. If you start to worry about the To-Do list, take a deep breath and think, There is enough time.

**Anxiety Buster #7: Get Your Lavender On!**

Lavender oil has many healing properties and can be used as a natural remedy to reduce anxiety and other nervous conditions. There are many ways to incorporate lavender into your calm tool kit:

1. Add essential lavender oil to your bath water for a calming bath. Use water infused with lavender leaves to soothe painful joints and muscles.

2. Fall asleep quicker when you add a few drops to a tissue and place under your pillow.

3. Use lavender in an oil diffuser to help with [insomnia](https://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/insomnia). The sweet woody [smell](https://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/scent)of the lavender oil helps you to fall asleep and stay asleep.

4. For headaches, apply lavender oil to a cotton ball or your fingertips and massage slowly into your temples. The smell will relax you as the oil eases your headache.

5. Lavender is used in aromatherapy massage as a muscle relaxant. Massage the oil into the skin and unknot the muscles of the back and reduce spasms.

6. Lavender can be used as an expectorant. It breaks up the mucous from nasal and chest congestion that accompanies a cold.

7. Inhale lavender oil to help with pain [management](https://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/leadership), especially after a workout, a therapy session, or surgery.

**Anxiety Buster #8: Go Green!**

Diet affects anxiety. A morning glass of green juice can get you on the right side of calm.

For a different and delicious way to get your daily vegetables try this recipe: Combine one banana or green apple, a bunch of kale, sliced ginger, one lime, cucumber slices, a few ice cubes, and a cup of water to a blender or juicer. For added protein, add an egg, yogurt, nuts, or protein powder.

**Anxiety Buster #9: Reduce Caffeine, Sugar and Processed Foods From Your Diet**

Caffeine can cause heart palpitations if you ingest too much. Caffeine also can trigger panic or anxiety attacks, especially if you have an anxiety disorder. Hypoglycemia, or low blood sugar, can also cause palpitations.

Sugar acts as an adrenal [stimulant](https://www.psychologytoday.com/conditions/stimulant-related-disorders) and can cause anxiety or even panic attacks. Other offensive foods include those containing refined flour products, and even wheat since this causes inflammation.

Besides caffeine, and sugar, food allergies are a big contributing factor in your overactive central nervous system.

**Anxiety Buster #10: Get Some Accountability**

If you're BFF with Nervous Nellie or Anxious Allen, put your keyed-up energy to good use. Vow to work on healthier ways to cope when feeling stressed.

How to get your accountability on:

* Share this resource with a friend
* Pick a few strategies that resonate with both of you
* Make a plan to call each other out when you stray
* Give praise when you make positive changes
* Start a [Facebook](https://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/social-networking) group and post regular tips to decrease stress and anxiety

**Anxiety Buster #11: Challenge Negative Core Beliefs**

Remember that thoughts precede feelings. Negative thoughts lead to negative emotions, which lead to negative behaviors. For example:

* Jocelyn wakes up and immediately thinks, *I'm gonna blow the PowerPoint presentation today. I just want to stay in bed all day*
* She feels unmotivated, nervous and sluggish
* She yells at her kids when they don't dress fast enough

How to challenge your negative mood:

1. Record your thoughts periodically. Pay attention to when you feel stressed out.

2. Write the feelings that accompany the thoughts. Think one-word responses like frustrated, angry, worthless and defeated, etc.

3. Challenge reality. This is hard because we tend to lack objectivity about the truth. Is there proof you don't deserve that job promotion? Were you written up because of shoddy work performance?

If you commit to recording your daily thoughts and feelings, along with reality testing, you'll see that many of your negative feelings are created in your mind, and not based in reality.  
The good news is you created the negative thought, and you can un-create it.

Keeping a journal can help relieve stress and anxiety, especially if you focus on the positive.

**Anxiety Buster #12: Listen To Music**

Listening to music can have a very relaxing effect on the body.

Slow-paced instrumental music can induce the relaxation response by helping lower blood pressure and heart rate, as well as stress hormones.

Some types of classical, Celtic, Native American and Indian music can be particularly soothing, but simply listening to the music you enjoy is effective too (22).

Nature sounds can also be very calming. This is why they're often incorporated into relaxation and meditation music.

**Anxiety Buster #13: Attend a Social Gathering (Even If You Don't Want To)**

If you're prone to [social anxiety](https://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/shyness), it's important to make time for socialization. It's cool to be an [introvert](https://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/introversion), but know that we live in a universe that revolves around connecting with others.

**Anxiety Buster #14: Spend Time With Family and Friends**

Social support from friends and family can help you get through stressful times.

Being part of a friend network gives you a sense of belonging and self-worth, which can help you in tough times.

One study found that for women, in particular, spending time with friends and children helps release oxytocin, a natural stress reliever. This effect is called "tend and befriend," and is the opposite of the fight-or-flight response (13).

Furthermore, both men and women benefit from friendship.

Another study found that men and women with the fewest social connections were more likely to suffer from depression and anxiety (14).

BOTTOM LINE:

Having strong social ties may help you get through stressful times and lower your risk of anxiety.

8. Laugh

It's hard to feel anxious when you're laughing. It's good for your health, and there are a few ways it may help relieve stress:

**Anxiety Buster #15: Schedule a Physical Exam to Rule Out a Medical Condition**

If your anxiety has spiked recently, or if you were previously able to cope with life, and now not so much, your doctor can determine if there's a medical condition responsible for your anxiety. Ask for a blood panel, and be honest about your symptoms.

**Anxiety Buster #16: Exercise, Exercise, Exercise!**

Exercise is nature's anti-anxiety remedy. Besides clearing the mind, firing up the endorphins, and helping you sleep soundly at night, researchers have found that individuals who exercise vigorously and regularly were 25 percent less likely to develop an anxiety disorder within five years.

**Anxiety Buster #17: Consider Supplements!**

Several supplements are used to reduce stress and anxiety. Here is a brief overview of some of the most common ones:

**Lemon balm:** Lemon balm is a member of the mint family that has been studied for its anti-anxiety effects.

**Omega-3 fatty acids:** One study showed that medical students who received omega-3 supplements experienced a 20% reduction in anxiety symptoms.

**Ashwagandha:** Ashwagandha is an herb used in Ayurvedic medicine to treat stress and anxiety. Several studies suggest that it's effective.

**Green tea:** Green tea has many polyphenol antioxidants, which provide health benefits. It may help stress and anxiety by increasing serotonin levels.

**Valerian:** Valerian root is a popular sleep aid due to its tranquilizing effect. It contains valerenic acid, which alters GABA receptors to lower anxiety.

**Kava-kava:** Kava-kava is a psychoactive member of the pepper family. It has long been used as a sedative in the South Pacific and is increasingly used in Europe and the US to treat mild stress and anxiety.

*Some supplements can interact with medications or have side effects, so you may want to consult with a doctor if you have a medical condition.*

**Anxiety Buster #18: Cuddle**

Cuddling, kissing, hugging and sex can all help relieve stress (19, 20).

Positive physical contact can help release oxytocin and lower cortisol. This can help lower blood pressure and heart rate, both of which are physical symptoms of stress.

Interestingly, humans aren't the only ones who cuddle for stress relief. Chimpanzees also cuddle friends who are stressed (21).

BOTTOM LINE:

Positive touch from cuddling, hugging, kissing and sex may help lower stress by releasing oxytocin and lowering blood pressure.

**Anxiety Buster #19: Light A Candle**

Burning Incense, essential oil candles or scented candles may help reduce your feelings of stress and anxiety.

Some scents are especially soothing. Here are some of the most calming scents:

Lavender.

Rose.

Vetiver.

Bergamot.

Roman chamomile.

Neroli.

Frankincense.

Sandalwood.

Ylang ylang.

Orange or orange blossom.

Geranium.

Using scents to treat your mood is called aromatherapy. Several studies show that aromatherapy can decrease anxiety and improve sleep

Keeping a journal can help relieve stress and anxiety, especially if you focus on the positive.

**Anxiety Buster #20: Chew Gum**

For a super easy and quick stress reliever, try chewing a stick of gum.

One study showed that people who chewed gum had a greater sense of well-being and lower stress (11).

There are a couple possible reasons for this.

One theory is that chewing gum causes brain waves similar to those of relaxed people. Another is that chewing gum promotes blood flow to the brain.

Additionally, one recent study found that stress relief was greatest when people chewed more strongly (12).

BOTTOM LINE:

According to several studies, chewing gum may help you relax. It may also promote well-being and reduce stress.