



COPING WITH ANXIETY

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major effect on our lives. Many of us are facing challenges that can be stressful, overwhelming, and cause strong emotions in us, such as anxiety, commonly defined as fear in the absence of actual danger. Whether it takes the form of full-blown panic or chronic worry, anxiety has the potential of limiting every aspect of our lives. For example, most children are simply afraid of being afraid; they drop out of school; fear pursuing their chosen careers; develop bad relationships with parents and teachers; they are defined by failure; and most importantly, they are kept prisoners in their own homes.

Anxiety and fear are closely related, like friends. One view is that while fear is a direct response to realistic threat such as suddenly seeing a snake in front of you; anxiety, on the other hand, is an unreasonable reaction to a perceived threat, whether current or future. The consequence of anxiety is the feeling of being overwhelmed, out of control of one's life, completely out of one's depth, and the feeling of being emotionally drained.

Anxiety follows a trajectory of common signs and symptoms: characterised by physically experiencing muscular pain or difficulty in sleeping; feeling fearful that something bad is going to happen; a dominant thinking pattern that "I can't control myself"; with the resultant behaviour of poor concentration and avoiding situations or tasks at school or work.

Tips on coping with anxiety:

- The old adage from Henry Ford taught us that "whether you think you can or you think you can't, either way you are right" – So, be the boss of your thoughts. Try to turn any negative thoughts into positive ones. Picture yourself facing your fears head-on. The more you do this in your mind, the easier it will be to deal with it when it happens.
- Help out in your community. Spend time doing good things for others. It can help you get anxiety out of your head. Volunteer work in your community.
- Schedule your worry session with yourself. Take time to identify what's bothering you and what you can do about it. Focus on what actually makes you anxious.
- Tame tense muscles. Relax them regularly with exercise.

If you are looking for one person who will change your life, look into the mirror.

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