



CONNECT WITH EASE

Employee Assistance Service for Education

Monthly Article

Anxiety, Fear and Panic

How to Relieve Immediate Feelings of Anxiousness, Fear, and Panic



EASE CAN HELP DURING DIFFICULT TIMES

CONNECT WITH EASE:

(800) 882-1341

Free confidential professional help for district employees and family members:

Family troubles. Emotional distress.
Job stress.

Anxiety. Drug/alcohol use. Grief. Loss.
Life transition issues.

Professional counselors are ready to help.

Call the EASE Hotline for 24/7 assistance.

Message from EASE

In the midst of the pain and suffering we have seen in our communities, country, and the world over the last few months due to the coronavirus pandemic and the tragic killing of George Floyd, feelings of anxiety are at an all time high. It is important to be aware that for the Black and African American communities, this pain and suffering has been pervasive and on-going. The stress of inequities, continued oppression, and history repeating itself are critical factors that can contribute to increased levels of anxiety and other possible mental health issues.

Whether it's racial tensions, unrest, the coronavirus or economic hardships, many may likely be feeling anxious, depressed, and isolated right now. We want you to know that you are not alone. There are increasing numbers of people reaching out for support across the country and here with EASE. Opportunities and access to counseling are necessary as a healthy option for support and healing. During this time, I urge you to take care of yourselves, your loved ones, and your community. Be aware of and monitor how you are feeling. Reach out to your circles of trust for processing and feedback. There is great healing in our communities, whether that be family, friends, work colleagues, church, etc. Be kind and compassionate towards yourself and others. Practice pausing...

Anxiety can be a debilitating and scary experience. Learning about how anxiety may be manifesting itself in your life is important to gaining a sense of control and helping others. Take time to practice coping strategies to take care of yourself. *If needed, reach out to a professional ... **EASE is here to support you!***

ANXIETY, FEAR AND PANIC

By: EASE Staff

In the wake of very difficult times, you may be experiencing feelings of anxiety, fear or panic. As you've sheltered in place these past few months and have tried to process the recent tragedy and pain of the injustices in our society, you may be experiencing feelings of constant fear and a heightened sense of arousal. During this period we can benefit from knowing when fear and anxiety are adaptive and when they become problems so that we know how to cope with these reactions on our own and when to reach out for help.

Anxiety and fear are both closely related reactions that contain the idea of danger or possibility of injury. Fear is usually seen as a reaction to specific, observable danger whereas anxiety is seen as a future-oriented fear. Fear is a reaction that triggers the body's automatic flight or fight response when you feel threatened, under pressure, or when you are facing a challenging situation. Unlike fear, anxiety is the anticipation of a threat that is feared. For example, worrying about getting the virus when you step out to the grocery store or return to work. These matters are adaptive as you can use the anxiety as motivation to protect yourself by following the safety guidelines. Anxiety is not a bad thing as it can help you to stay focused, alert, spur you to action and motivate you to solve problems. It keeps you vigilant to potential risks and you can use it adaptively to manage the threat of constant fear. However, it is important to remember that when anxiety is constant or becomes overwhelming you need to check in with yourself and see whether these worries and fears interfere with your relationships and daily life. This is important as you differentiate your feelings of anxiousness with something that is more serious.

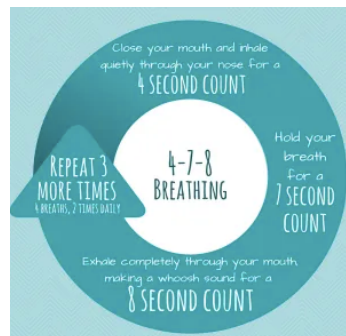
Symptoms of Anxiety

- Irregular heartbeat (e.g., rapid)
- Feeling lightheaded or dizzy
- Chest pains
- Headaches
- Sweating
- Stomach issues
- Feeling tearful
- Insomnia
- Constant worrying
- Trouble breathing

Symptoms of a Panic Attack

- Sudden, intense anxiety and fear
- Feeling that you're losing control
- Sweating, trembling or shaking
- Shortness of breath or breathing very quickly
- Feeling sick (nausea)
- Feeling a sense of impending doom or death
- Ringing ears
- Chest tightness and pain
- Feeling sweaty or chilled
- Sensory overwhelm

HOW TO RELIEVE IMMEDIATE FEELINGS OF ANXIOUSNESS, PANIC OR FEAR



4-7-8 BREATHING

- Find a place to sit or lie down comfortably. Be sure to practice good posture. Prepare by resting the tip of your tongue against the roof of your mouth, right behind your top front teeth.
- Follow the steps in the cycle of one breath:
 - First, let your lips part. Make a whooshing sound, exhaling completely through your mouth.
 - Next, close your lips, inhaling silently through your nose as you count to four in your head.
 - Then, for seven seconds, hold your breath.
 - Make another whooshing exhale from your mouth for eight seconds.
- When you inhale again, you initiate a new cycle of breath. Practice this pattern for four full breaths.

SLOW BREATHING

- When you are first learning this breathing relaxation exercise you may find it easiest to practice lying flat on your back, knees bent, feet flat on the floor and eight inches apart.
 - Place one hand on your chest and one hand on your abdomen. Hold your breath and count to 10 then breathe out.
 - Then inhale slowly through your nose for 3 seconds. The hand on your abdomen should rise whilst the hand on your chest should stay relatively still. Then exhale through your mouth for three seconds, making a whooshing noise as you breathe out. The hand on your abdomen should fall as you exhale. After a minute of breathing in and out in a six second cycle, hold your breath again for 10 seconds. Keep repeating this process for 5 minutes.

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/overcome-fear-anxiety>
<https://meganjohnsoncoaching.com/lower-stress-breathing/>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/science-choice/201812/anxiety-vs-fear>

TALK TO US

EASE has counselors if you want to talk.
(800) 882-1341