

## RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS

Anxiety problems affect feelings, thoughts, actions, and the physical body.

### Feelings

- Fear or dread
- Irritation or anger

### Thoughts

- “What if....”
- “Something terrible will happen”
- “I’m just going to embarrass myself and everyone will laugh at me”
- “Nothing ever works out...I’m a failure”
- “Why won’t they do this the way I want it to be done?”
- “I don’t know why I can’t control this”

### Actions

- Avoiding things, people, or places that make you feel anxious
- Often using distractions to avoid anxiety
- Checking things often to make sure everything is okay
- Often seeking reassurance from others
- Struggling to pay attention or concentrate
- Getting very angry at other people over minor problems

### Changes in your body

- Restlessness, or finding it hard to sit still
- Racing heart
- Sweating more than usual
- Difficulties sleeping well
- Feeling tired often
- Muscle aches and pains
- More digestive problems than usual, like stomach aches

## LEARN MORE

**HeretoHelp**—visit [www.heretohelp.bc.ca](http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca) for information, screening self-tests and personal stories about anxiety. You’ll also find Managing a Mental Illness, a series that guides you from diagnosis to recovery, and Wellness Modules, which offer self-care tips and strategies. You’ll also learn about a HeretoHelp initiative called Healthy Minds | Healthy Campuses, a growing community aimed at improving mental health on BC campuses. See [www.healthycampuses.ca](http://www.healthycampuses.ca).

**AnxietyBC**—visit [www.anxietybc.com](http://www.anxietybc.com) for information on anxiety and anxiety disorders and self-help resources to help you manage anxiety at home. Their free app, MindShift, can help you learn more helpful ways to think and helpful ways to relax. Look for tools to help with text anxiety, performance anxiety, perfectionism, and conflict.

**Mindcheck**—Visit [www.mindcheck.ca](http://www.mindcheck.ca) for information about mental health, resources, and support. You can take a quiz to check your mood, and their self-care resources include several apps and websites you can try on your own.

**Canadian Mental Health Association**—visit [www.cmha.bc.ca](http://www.cmha.bc.ca) or call 1-800-555-8222 (toll-free in BC) or your local CMHA branch for information and community resources on mental health or any mental illness. A free program called Bounce Back helps adults experiencing mild to moderate depression, stress, or anxiety, using self-help materials and coaching. See [www.bouncebackbc.ca](http://www.bouncebackbc.ca).

## WANT MORE INFO ON ANXIETY?

This brochure is part of a series on young adults and anxiety. To learn more about dealing with anxiety, finding help, and feeling better, see *Dealing with Anxiety: For Young Adults* at [www.heretohelp.bc.ca/for-young-adults](http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/for-young-adults).

FOR YOUNG ADULTS

## LEARN ABOUT ANXIETY



**Canadian Mental Health Association**  
British Columbia  
*Mental health for all*



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The Canadian Mental Health Association, BC Division is proud to be affiliated with HeretoHelp. HeretoHelp is a project of the BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information, a group of non-profit agencies providing good-quality information to help individuals and families maintain or improve their mental well-being. The BC Partners are funded by BC Mental Health and Substance Use Services, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority.

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**heretohelp**

Mental health and substance use information you can trust

We all experience anxiety from time to time. While we might dream of a life without worry or anxiety, a little bit of anxiety is a good thing—it's even helpful in the right situations. However, too much anxiety too often can take a real toll on our well-being. We can't avoid anxiety or ignore it forever, but we can learn how to manage anxiety so we can live well through the normal ups and downs of life.

## SOME ANXIETY IS PART OF BEING HUMAN

Anxiety is a normal and expected response to a difficult situation. Anxiety is simply your body's way of telling us that there is danger. "Threats" aren't always physical. They include important deadlines at work or school, conflicts with loved ones, or financial worries.

Some anxiety is helpful. A manageable amount of anxiety can help motivate you to get things done. It can give you an extra push to finish an assignment or work through a problem at work.

Normally, anxiety ...

- Is a response to a specific situation, problem, or event
- Is relative to the situation—a minor situation causes minor anxiety while a serious situation may cause stronger anxiety
- Is realistic—your anxiety is pretty reasonable given the situation
- Starts to subside when the situation has ended

Anxiety starts to become a problem when ...

- It can feel like it came out of nowhere
- Is much more intense than you'd expect
- Is unrealistic—such as focusing on the worst possible outcome for a minor concern
- Remains, even when there are no other reasons to feel so anxious

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Too much anxiety too often can start to cause harm and stop you from getting the most out of life. It may not mean you have a mental illness like an anxiety disorder, but it can still have an impact on your life. It's important to pay attention to this problem anxiety because it can get worse. It's a sign that you might need some extra support.

## ANXIETY DISORDERS ARE MENTAL ILLNESSES

There are a few different anxiety disorders and they have different symptoms, but they are all related to problem anxiety. In general, an anxiety disorder may cause a lot of anxiety and it usually feels really hard to control it. Someone may avoid places or things that make them feel anxious. They may have a hard time going about their daily life. Good treatment can help people manage this anxiety.

## STRESS VS. ANXIETY

Stress and anxiety can feel really similar, but they are a bit different. The causes of stress are usually easier to figure out and after a stressful event is over you usually start to feel better. Stress is also often about having too much to cope with (feeling overwhelmed) or being prevented from doing something you need to do (feeling frustrated). Anxiety can also feel overwhelming and frustrating, but the focus is usually more about the future. Some people may even feel a lot of anxiety about the anxiety itself.

## PANIC ATTACKS

are a sensation of extreme anxiety. Someone who is experiencing a panic attack will suddenly feel intense dread. They may feel shaky, start sweating, hear or feel their heart pounding, and feel dizzy, nauseous, or even disconnected from reality. The feelings peak within a few minutes, but it can take a bit more time to settle down. Panic attacks can be very frightening—in fact, many people assume that they're having a heart attack. Panic attacks can come up when you're under a lot of stress, but they can also be part of an anxiety disorder or other mental illness. If you start to experience panic attacks more frequently, it's best to talk to your doctor to see what might be going on.

## ANXIETY DISORDERS ARE NOT YOUR FAULT

Anxiety disorders are caused by different things. Your biology, family history or genes, and how you learned to deal with fear and worry when you were younger can cause anxiety disorders. Stressful or frightening events in your life can also lead to anxiety disorders. Different ways of thinking and understanding the world can add to anxiety.