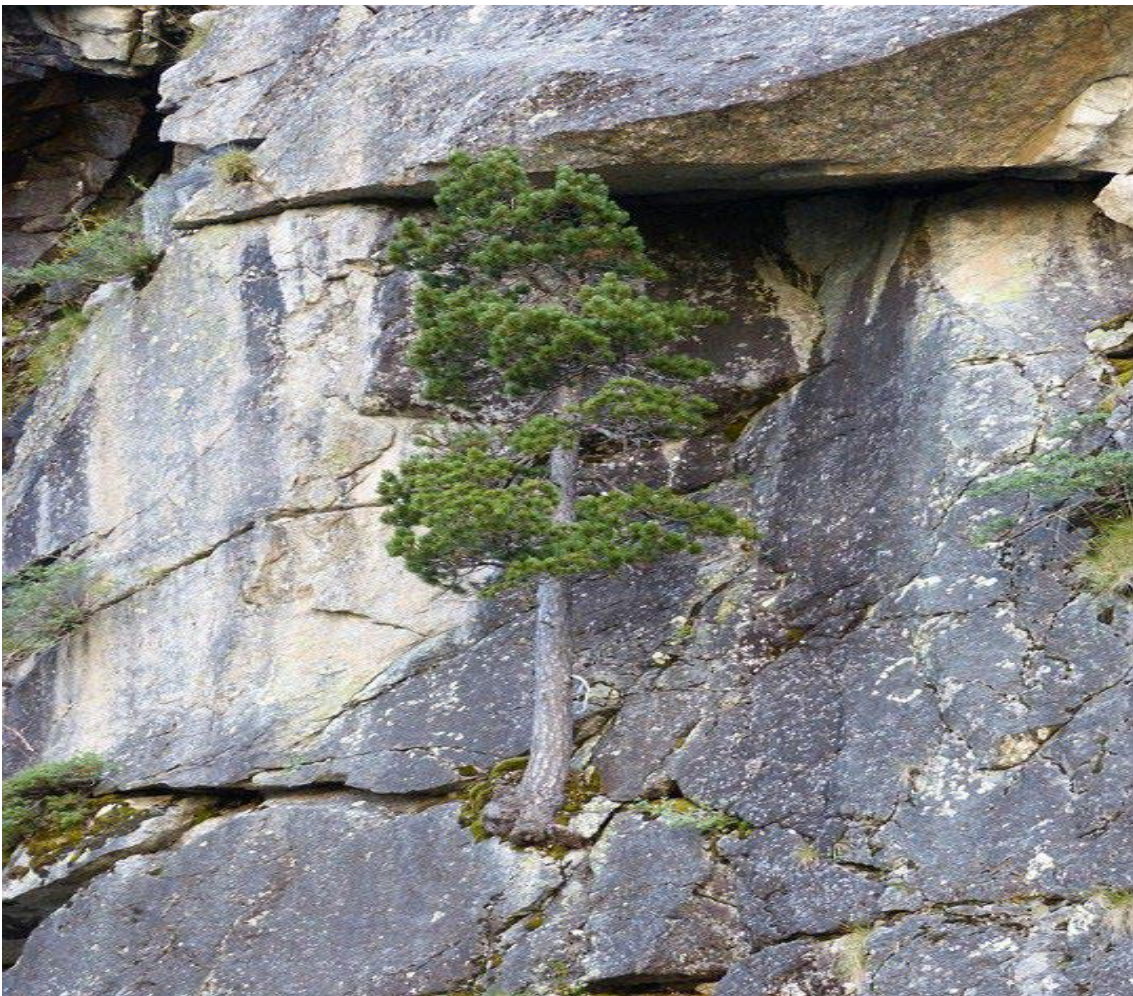




Canadian Mental
Health Association
Alberta Northwest Region
Mental health for all

DEPRESSION ANXIETY & RESILIENCE



7 Coping Strategies that Work!

Depression and Anxiety: What It Is and How Does it Affect You?

WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

Depression is a very real condition. While many people think that depression is simply a state of mind and something you should just “snap out of,” it’s an illness that affects not just the mind, but the whole body.

When you’re depressed, you experience changes in eating, sleeping, the way you feel about yourself, and even the way you approach the most mundane things.

Depression is not simply feeling blue; it’s a true illness which can last weeks, months, or even years.

You may notice a variety of symptoms when you’re depressed. These symptoms vary widely from individual to individual, and they’re also dependent upon the severity of the depression.

If you’re depressed, you may experience the following:

1. Difficulty focusing or making decisions
2. Negative thought processes
3. Poor self esteem
4. Thoughts of hurting yourself
5. A lack of motivation or irritability
6. Feeling ill
7. Feelings of helplessness
8. Getting better seems hopeless



Depression and anxiety are **very real** illnesses that can quickly take over your life.

Building resilience is another way to cope with depression and anxiety.

WHAT IS ANXIETY?

Anxiety is another very real concern that plagues many of us. While we all feel anxious from time to time, for some people, anxiety becomes a way of life for reasons unknown even to the anxious person.

Anxiety has the ability to affect our entire body and mind.

When you struggle with anxiety it changes the way you feel, how you behave, and even affects your physical well-being.

Anxiety is much like feeling fear, but you may not know what you're fearful or anxious about. This causes a vicious cycle of feeling anxious and then being afraid of being anxious!

Anxiety is often triggered by stress.

We all encounter stress, but some of us handle it differently than others. Those who are not equipped to deal with stress effectively, or those that endure ongoing stress, often struggle with anxiety.

Depression and anxiety often go hand in hand; when you have one, chances are you will have the other. Both are very real illnesses that can quickly take over your life. You may not even realize how profoundly you're being affected by depression and anxiety.

Fortunately, there are some ways in which you can take action to improve your physical and mental well-being if you suffer from depression or anxiety.

ANXIETY MAY CAUSE YOU TO EXPERIENCE SYMPTOMS SUCH AS:

- Muscle tension
- Shaking
- Upset stomach
- "Butterflies"
- Headache
- Backache
- Rapid heart rate
- Numbness
- Increased perspiration



Actionable Strategies for Coping with Depression and Anxiety

1. TALK OPENLY ABOUT YOUR FEELINGS.

Let your doctor, family, friends, or a mental health professional know how you're feeling. Sometimes putting your feelings into words lightens the burden.

It is very important to call someone right away if you feel you might harm, or even kill yourself.

Be sure to talk to someone you trust who will really listen.

How This Helps You:

- You will be free to express your deepest feelings without fear of judgement.
- Sharing feelings of anxiety and depression often brings some relief.
- It will give you a new perspective of your situation.

How You Can Do This:

- Ask a friend to listen.
- Join a support group.
- Make an appointment with your doctor or a therapist.

Alone we can do so little. Together we can do so much.

-Helen Keller

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Actionable Strategies for Coping with Depression and Anxiety

2. POSTPONE YOUR WORRIES.

You can often take the anxiety out of a situation if you delay the process of worrying.

This is one of the most effective strategies to help reduce excessive anxiety.

How This Helps You:

- It will help you live in the moment.
- You will realize that most worries never actually come to fruition.
- It will help you take the focus off of the things that are out of your control.

How You Can Do This:

- Tell yourself you'll think about it tomorrow, then let it go by reading a great book, watching a funny movie or doing one of your favourite hobbies.
- Write yourself a note to take care of the issue at a specific time in the future.
- Convince yourself that you are capable of dealing with challenges as they arise.

3.

Every great achievement was once considered impossible.

-Unknown

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Actionable Strategies for Coping with Depression and Anxiety

3. PUT YOUR WORRIES INTO PERSPECTIVE.

If you know what you're worried about, think about how it's affecting your life. Do these things really deserve this much attention?

Often when we take a close look at what's causing us to be depressed or anxious, we realize that we're giving them too much power over us.

How This Helps You:

- It keeps things in perspective, so you can live a more balanced life.
- It helps you realize that things may not be as bad as you thought.
- It enables you to think outside of your comfort zone.

How You Can Do This:

- Make a list of all the things you're worried about.
- Ask someone you trust for their feedback about the items on your list.
- Join a support group where you can share your worries and also listen to those of other people. This will often give you a whole new perspective.

All things are difficult before they are easy.

-Thomas Fuller

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Actionable Strategies for Coping with Depression and Anxiety

4. CHANGE YOUR ROUTINE.

When we're depressed or suffering from anxiety, we often withdraw from normal activities. Unfortunately, this just gives us more time to feel worried and depressed!

Instead of continuing this pattern of withdrawal, change your routine so you won't feed your depression or anxiety.

How This Helps You:

- You will have less free time to worry.
- You will break out of your negative spiral.
- You will realize that you've been missing out on living.

How You Can Do This:

- Call a friend and ask them to come and help you go out.
- Join a support group or participate in a community activity.
- Force yourself to get out of the house at least once each day even if just for 5 minutes.
- Take small steps to doing any activity, in your own time. Tell yourself; "I will wash one dish." Success breeds success!

Any change, even a change for the better, is always accompanied by drawbacks and discomforts.

- Arnold Bennett

Actionable Strategies for Coping with Depression and Anxiety

6. KEEP A JOURNAL.

Writing down your issues helps you to see them for what they really are so you can let them go. By writing out (or drawing or pasting pictures from magazines, etc.) your deepest thoughts and feelings, you're also releasing the tension and stress from within you.

The writing process can help you come to terms with the depression and anxiety that is plaguing your life.

How This Helps You:

- It allows you to get things off your chest.
- It's a fulfilling way to express your feelings.
- It enables you to take action regarding your feelings.

How You Can Do This:

- Write in a paper journal every day when you're feeling particularly anxious.
- Create an online blog where you can share your feelings with others.
- Draw, paint, use photos, magazine words or sketch your thoughts and feelings.

A champion is someone who gets up, even when he can't.

-Jack Dempsey

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Actionable Strategies for Coping with Depression and Anxiety

7. SEEK THE ADVICE OF A PROFESSIONAL.

Doctors, therapists, counsellors or life coaches are professionals who can help you treat your symptoms and underlying causes so you can get your life back.

These professionals can help you turn your life around and improve the things that could stand some improvement.

How this Helps You:

- You will gain the wisdom and experience of a professional who will help you find your own wisdom within you.
- You will receive direction in living a life that's fulfilling to you.
- You will build a support system that puts your well-being first.

How You Can Do This:

- Look in your local phone book for professionals specializing in depression and anxiety.
- Ask your family physician or other mental health care worker you might know, for a referral.
- Ask a friend or family member to refer you to anyone who might have helped them in the past.

Don't cry because it's over. Smile because it happened.

-Dr. Seuss

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Actionable Strategies for Coping with Depression and Anxiety

True friendship brings sunshine to the shade,
and shade to the sunshine.

-Thomas Burke

Putting These Coping Strategies to Work for You

If you want to overcome depression or anxiety, strive to employ as many of these strategies as you can. The more tools you use to your advantage, the sooner you'll begin to feel like yourself again!

In addition to these strategies, **be sure to get plenty of sleep, eat nutritious foods, and exercise regularly.** Taking care of your body will also help you recover from depression or anxiety far faster. Of course, you must follow the advice of your physician.

You can begin using these coping strategies *immediately*. All of these coping strategies require that you take some action, but they'll also help you work your way towards a happier and healthier life.

Integrate them into your daily routines now and you'll soon realize that you're back in control of your life!

RECAP:

1. Talk openly about your feelings.
2. Postpone your worries.
3. Put your worries into perspective.
4. Change your routine.
5. Think positive thoughts.
6. Keep a journal.
7. Seek the advice of a professional.

Once you experience a successful try, you will want to try something else!

