

Here are ten ways to quickly **reduce your anxiety** and relax:

1. Remember to breathe

Stop for a moment and focus on breathing deeply. Sit up straight, then take a long breath through your nose, hold it for the count of three, then exhale slowly, while relaxing the muscles in your face, jaw, shoulders and abdominal area. This will help slow your heart rate and lower your blood pressure. Practice your deep breathing from time to time so that it becomes second nature to do it when under stress.

2. Take a mental step back

Anxiety tends to be focused on the future, so instead, try to focus on the present. Tamar Chansky, Ph.D., psychologist and author of *Freeing Yourself from Anxiety*, suggests that you ask yourself what is happening and what, if anything, needs to be done right now. If nothing needs to be done now, make a conscious decision to revisit the situation later in the day, when you are calmer.

3. Follow the 3-3-3 rule

This is a simple way to change your focus. Start by looking around you and naming three things you can see. Then listen. What three sounds do you hear? Next, move three parts of your body, such as your fingers, toes, or clench and release your shoulders.

4. Meditate

Research shows that practicing **mindful meditation** can reduce anxiety and other psychological stresses. We are all capable of mindfulness, but it is easier to do when we have practiced and made it a habit. If you are new to the practice, you may wish to try guided meditation with the assistance of audiotapes or a phone app. It is not difficult or exotic, but just learning to pay attention to the present. Just sit up straight with your feet on the floor. Close your eyes and recite, either out loud or to yourself, a mantra. The mantra can be any positive statement or sound you choose. Try to sync the mantra with your breaths. If your mind drifts to distracting thoughts, don't get frustrated. Just refocus and continue. Try to practice a few minutes each day and it will be an easy and accessible tool for your anti-anxiety toolkit.

5. Reach out

Telling a trusted friend or family member how you are feeling is a very personal decision, but those who are close to you can be a tremendous resource for handling anxiety.

Talking to someone else, preferably in person, or by phone can offer a new perspective on your situation. Don't hesitate to ask for what you need. If you need someone to go with you to a movie, or for a walk, or just to sit with you for a time, speak up. No matter what, it is always comforting to talk to someone who cares about you.

6. Physical activity

Not a long distance runner or athlete? This is probably not the moment to start extreme training. Remember though, that all forms of exercise are good for you and help ease the symptoms of anxiety. Even gentle forms of exercise, such as walking, yoga, or tai chi, release those feel-good chemicals. If you are not able to do those immediately, do some stretching exercises at your desk, or take a short walk outside during lunch.

7. Music

According to a 2015 study, people with mild or severe anxiety benefit from listening to soothing music. Music has been proven to lower the heart rate and blood pressure. Keep music available so that you can easily listen to your favorite songs or even nature sounds. Create playlists so that you can listen and get quick relief from symptoms. Research also shows that singing releases endorphins and oxytocin, which alleviates anxiety.

Apparently, you don't even have to be good. Just sing.

8. Be kind to yourself

Sometimes you just need to do something to help you feel better. That may mean getting a massage, or a soothing facial. To relax quickly, put a warmed heat wrap around your neck and shoulders. Close your eyes and relax the muscles in your face and neck.

Sometimes it helps to simply disconnect from the noise of the world. Even if you only have five minutes, turn off your phone, computer, television and let the world turn without you for a little while. Silent time is soothing.

9. Laughter

Anxiety is certainly no joke, but laughter has some surprising benefits. Similar to deep breathing, the act of laughing increases oxygen levels and helps with muscle relaxation. Laughter just feels good and lightens and shifts our focus. Watch a comedy or call that friend who always makes you laugh. You'll be glad you did.

10. Creativity

If you have a creative streak, use it. The arts offer an outlook for all of those anxious feelings. If you are artistic, take a few minutes to draw or paint how you are feeling. Keep a soothing picture of a beach or your "happy place" where you can look at it and take a mental vacation. Expressive writing has been shown to help with anxiety and depression. Keeping a gratitude journal reduces negative thoughts and helps you remember all the good things in your life. Try writing in your gratitude journal at bedtime. It may help you sleep better.

You may wish to make a short list of helpful tips which have worked for you so that you can refer to it when you are overwhelmed by anxiety symptoms. Remember, we are here to help you understand and deal with your anxiety.