

# Coping with Anxiety

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## What is anxiety?

“An emotion characterized by apprehension and somatic symptoms of tension in which an individual anticipates impending danger, catastrophe, or misfortune. The body often mobilizes itself to meet the perceived threat: Muscles become tense, breathing is faster, and the heart beats more rapidly.

Anxiety may be distinguished from fear both conceptually and physiologically, although the two terms are often used interchangeably. Anxiety is considered a future-oriented, long-acting response broadly focused on a diffuse threat, whereas fear is an appropriate, present-oriented, and short-lived response to a clearly identifiable and specific threat.” ([American Psychological Association](#), 2026)

This definition acknowledges there is a difference between **fear** and **anxiety**. While **fear** is a reasonable response to a current stressor which goes away quite quickly, **anxiety** is longer-lasting and interferes with our functioning.

## Signs and symptoms of anxiety

Anxiety can look different from person to person, but [some general signs/symptoms](#) are:

- Difficulty with sleep
- Difficulty eating
- Catastrophic thinking or “what if” thinking
- Dizziness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Muscle tension
- Easily fatigued
- Trembling/shaking
- Dry mouth
- Sweating
- Stomachache
- Headaches
- Irritability



## Coping strategies

If your anxiety is overwhelming you, try some of the following strategies:

- [TIPP skills](#): temperature, intense exercise, paced breathing, paired muscle relaxation
- [Box Breathing](#)
- [5-4-3-2-1](#)
- [Grounding for Anxiety](#)
- [Progressive Muscle Relaxation, Guided Imagery, Thought Challenging, Deep Breathing](#)

For ongoing support, speak to a therapist or counsellor who is trained in working with anxiety.

Medication may be helpful as a part of a larger treatment strategy, depending on what your symptoms are. Please consult a psychiatrist or other medical professional trained in prescribing mental health medications.

