

ANXIETY TOOLBOX

What is ANXIETY?

- Stress – Our body or mind supercharging to meet a TANGIBLE demand – like running a race or taking a test.
- Distress - Our body's or mind's response to excessive demand - a deterioration of health, performance, and ability. Some tension or stress on our minds and bodies is good and healthy and is called Eustress (think: a tuned violin string to make it “sing”). Distress is when there is too much tension.
- Fear - A rapid involuntary biochemical physiological response to a threat or perceived threat that surges adrenaline through the body, constricts surface-level blood vessels, dilates the pupils, increases heart and respiratory rate, and halts all nonessential body processes in order to prepare the body to fight, flight, or freeze. This involuntary (think: hardware) fear response comes from a completely irrational part of the brain called the Amygdala, a part of the brain that not only generates this response to a threat but it also constantly, every second of the day and night, scans your senses for potential threats.
- Anxiety – A collaborative function of the Amygdala and the Prefrontal Cortex (particularly the Ventromedial Prefrontal Cortex), the judgment and abstract thinking part of the brain, that scans the realm of *potential* dangers for threats that *might* pop up in the future. The anxiety function does a lot of guess work about the future ("what-ifs") and about what other people think and feel or might think and feel while always assuming the negative. It is rightly associated with a sense of dread and pessimism. Anxiety has the physiological responses of a potential physical threat. Anxiety can also become an anxiety attack, which is the same sense of physical terror one might experience from an actual attack.
- Anxiety Disorder or Dysfunction is a matter of proportionality - How well does your level of anxiety and response to anxiety match up with reality? People with an anxiety disorder have an excessive desire to keep themselves safe from all potential negative potentialities. This is typically manifested in one area in particular in a person's life - e.g. hypochondriacs. One's susceptibility to an anxiety disorder can originate from genetics, personality style, or from a traumatic experience.
- While the keyword with depression is *VITALITY*, the keyword with anxiety is *WELL-BEING*. Anxiety impedes a person having a good sense of well-being and also a lack of a sense of well-being induces anxiety. An anxious person almost always feels in danger or under threat physically, socially, and/or emotionally.

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24/7 Hotlines: USA-1.800.273.8255, Suicide-1.800.784.2433, GA-1.800.715.4225, DeKalb-404.892.4646, Fulton-404.730.1600

Recognizing the voice of Anxious Andy - Cause he sounds just like you

- Negative
- Pessimistic
- Sees everything is a potential threat and opportunity for loss.
- Always feels vulnerable and under threat- socially, economically, physically, and/or emotionally.
- Easily Panicked
- Nervous
- Conflict Avoidant
- Drama Queen - thinks in all-or-nothing terms
- Lives in the past or imagined future
- Interprets all "coulds" as "have-tos"
- Self-Obsessed
- No sense of humor

How To Deal with Anxious Andy

1. Stop It - don't engage, don't play along, don't try to manage it or control it, acknowledge it, accept it and ignore it.
2. Trust God - This is the only solid ground and safe harbor. Circumstances will change and our abilities will fail us.
3. Reach out to your social network and **seek professional help**
4. Try grounding techniques (look it up) or Christian Centering Prayer - The Christian distinctive is that you are trying to open yourself up to God and be fully present to God instead of connecting with your divine center (which you don't have).
5. Pray for others & serve others - This helps the self-obsessive tendency of the anxious.
6. Burn off anxious energy through exercise
7. Live Philippians 4:4-9
8. Look for the humorous, enjoy humor, and make jokes
9. Name your fears and face them (this is called "Extinction Therapy")
10. Get clean, organized, and in a routine (helps with a sense of control)
11. Visualize/Imagine positive outcomes, interactions, and possibilities.
12. Make idle time and silence a priority (& TURN OFF THE NEWS & SOCIAL MEDIA!)

The Anxiety Game – Play this game to make the best use of the Serenity Prayer

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference. – Reinhold Niebuhr

1. Is the threat real or not real?
2. Is it likely or unlikely?
3. Is it a big or small deal?
4. Is it my business or not my business?
5. Is it in my control or not in my control

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