

Mind Your Mental Health

Anxiety: Myth vs Reality

Myth

Reality

Anxiety isn't a "real" illness

It's natural to have some anxiety and it can even be helpful at times. However, an anxiety disorder is an extreme form of anxiety that causes impairment. It needs to be diagnosed and treated.

It's obvious when someone has anxiety or an anxiety disorder.

Anxiety is unique to every individual. Many people with anxiety manage their symptoms. Others may display more noticeable behaviors such as avoidance or social withdrawal, reassurance seeking, or use of substances or alcohol.

Anxiety will get better over time.

An anxiety disorder won't resolve itself. Most people with anxiety disorders can experience great improvements with professional care.

Anxiety disorders are not very common.

Nearly one in five American adults experience some type of anxiety disorder in any given year.

Panic attacks, a symptom of anxiety, can make you pass out or lose control.

Panic attacks feel awful, but it's unlikely you will faint, which is caused by a sudden drop in blood pressure. During a panic attack, your blood pressure does not fall; it actually rises slightly. The good news is that with treatment you can learn how to successfully manage and reduce panic attacks.

If you have an anxiety disorder, it is important to avoid stressful situations.

Treating yourself as if you are fragile and avoiding risk isn't realistic. Avoiding anxiety tends to reinforce it. Effective treatment involves learning how to cope with anxiety, not avoid it.

Medication is the only treatment for anxiety disorders.

Medication can be effective, but, scientific research shows that cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) may be just as or more effective than medication. CBT explores how we think about certain things and the impact on our behavior.

If you eat right, exercise, avoid caffeine and live a healthy lifestyle, your anxiety will go away.

While you can reduce anxiety with healthy habits, if you have a disorder, you need professional help. Getting treatment for an anxiety disorder can truly allow you to overcome your fears. You need more help than just reducing your stress. You may need to learn to face your fears, learn new facts about your symptoms, stop avoiding, learn tolerance for some experience, or change how to think, feel and behave.

Help is available. For additional information, visit [MagellanHealth.com/MYMH](https://www.MagellanHealth.com/MYMH)

Sources: Anxiety and Depression Association of America, Everyday Health

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