

TIPS FOR HANDLING ANXIETY

God made us as an exquisite interconnected system carefully knitted together so that each part affects the whole. Anxiety arises not from one part, but from the interplay of several. To manage it, we need to consider our whole self.

**RIISING ABOVE
ANXIETY**

Your Thoughts: Think about what you think about.

1. **Learn to stand back** from your anxious thoughts and consider what's happening.
"We get to decide which thoughts we dwell on" (Johnson).
"Your belief informs your biology" (Jones).
2. **Learn to spot a lie**—even if it's coming from you. Learn to doubt your anxious emotions—are they telling you what is true?
3. **Remember what God has done for you.** Make a list or some memorial to all God has already done for you (See David's list in Psalm 103).
4. **Remember what God has promised you.** Make a list of God's promises to you. Keep it handy.
5. **Pray.** Take anxiety as a cue to pray. Read Philippians 4:6-8.
6. **Consider something beautiful.** Again, read Philippians 4:6-8.
7. **Say "Thank you."** "One heartfelt thank-you will suck the oxygen out of worry's world" (Lucado). Read Philippians 4:6-8, yet again!

Your Body: Get out of your head

1. **Look outside yourself.** Break the habit of being stuck in your anxious thoughts.
2. **Use grounding skills** (on next page) to focus on your surroundings.
3. **Move. Just move.** To look at the ravens and the lilies, you need to move.
4. **Listen to your body.** Anxiety can make you ignore signals from your body, but God designed your body to send those signals.
5. **Find a better rhythm.** Break old patterns that enable anxiety (bedtime, wake time, media use, etc.).
6. **Pay attention to the most critical factors** for physical and emotional health (Daniel): Sleep, Nutrition, Exercise.

Your Actions: What you do affects what you think and feel.

1. **Cut out unnecessary triggers.** Stop comparing yourself to others. Limit social media, which is designed to make you feel like something is missing.
2. **Slow down.** Even though you can't stop everything, make time to slow down when you can.
3. **Plan, humbly.** We need to plan without being anxious by actively conceding that any plan is subject to God's sovereignty (DeYoung) (See Proverbs 16:9, James 4:13-15).
4. **Sing a song.** Beyond being a prayer or reminder, the physical act of singing helps calm an anxious heart.
5. **Go to the body: Get help.** You are part of the body of Christ, "joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped" (Ephesians 4:16).
6. **Make an anxiety tool kit ...**



Build your anxiety tool kit.

Everyone's kit will be different, but it may include:

1. **Techniques to slow your breathing.**
2. **Grounding skills** to help you "be present."→
3. **Prayer**—maybe even a simple prayer you memorize.
4. **Reciting Scripture**—specific passages you've memorized that put your focus on God's goodness.
5. **Rereading a list of God's promises or a list of what He's done** specifically for you.
6. **Singing a song** or hymn that reminds you of beautiful things.
7. **Taking a walk outside** or finding someplace green.
8. **Talking to a friend** about what you're feeling.

If you're in shutdown (or heading that way):

1. Recognize what's happening.
2. Remember it won't last forever.
3. Tell Jesus what you're thinking.
4. Move, even if you don't feel like it.
5. Use your anxiety tool kit.
6. Get help.
7. Start small, but start.

Learn Grounding Skills:

To help overcome spiraling anxious thoughts, use these simple steps to move your attention away from your thoughts and toward your surroundings. Take a deep breath and identify:

- 5 things you can **see**
- 4 things you can **hear**
- 3 things you can **feel**
- 2 things you can **smell**
- 1 thing you can **taste**

How to help someone who struggles with anxiety

1. **Just be present.** "Your job is not to have the perfect words or actions," but to be present with the anxious person (Johnson).
2. **Don't pretend to understand** what they're going through if you really don't (Johnson).
3. **Don't blame someone for having anxiety** (Jones). Let them know it's okay to struggle.
4. **Remind them** that they're not crazy, they're not alone, and that this will end.
5. **Remind them of God's presence**, but don't preach. Be reassuring, brief, and quick to listen.
6. **Keep showing up.** Do all these things and "then do it all over and over again" (Johnson).



Adapted from:

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Johnson, Shawn. [Attacking Anxiety: From Panicked and Depressed to Alive and Free](#). Thomas Nelson, 2022.

Jones, M. Jill, LISW-CP, Interview May 30, 2024.

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Welch, Ed, "Fear is Not Sin" (available through the NHC Counseling Department).



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