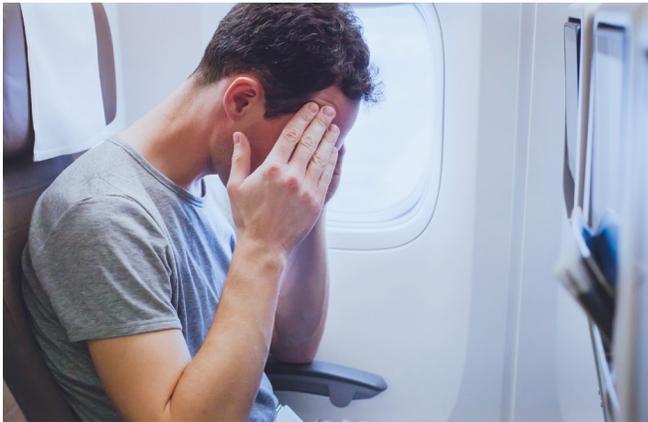


IDENTIFYING ANXIETY TRIGGERS

Identifying situations which make you feel anxious, also known as anxiety triggers, can help you find effective coping strategies.



Anxiety triggers refer to the events or situations that cause you to feel anxious. **They are not the reason that you have an anxiety disorder, but rather times that your anxiety is prevalent.**

Understanding what triggers your anxiety can help you create strategies to cope with these situations. Identifying your anxiety triggers can be difficult, this section will describe common triggers for anxiety, share how you can identify your own triggers, and give suggestions on what to do once you know your triggers.

IDENTIFYING ANXIETY TRIGGERS

Each person will have **different triggers** for their anxiety. These triggers can range from everyday occurrences to life changing events. For example, triggers may include phobias, social situations, caffeine, finances, the death of a loved one, and many others.

JOURNALING

It takes **dedication and time** to figure out what is triggering your anxiety. Overall, the best way to figure out what is triggering your anxious feelings is to pay attention to your thoughts and feelings. You can choose to practice this in whichever way works best for you. **One option is to journal** when you are feeling particularly anxious. This journal should include what thoughts you are having and the situation you are in as the thoughts occur. It is helpful to include as many details as you can leading up to your anxious moment. You can then reflect on this situation and try to identify any triggers that may have been present.



Try to commit to journaling your anxious feelings **for a full week**. When you look over your journal, try to identify common factors. You may notice that you feel more anxious on days where you have multiple cups of coffee, or that you are most anxious when you are alone. The attached worksheet is meant to be used for tracking your anxious thoughts and feelings as well as any triggers you think may be related to them.

TALKING THROUGH YOUR EXPERIENCE

Another way to try to identify your triggers is by talking through an experience where you were anxious with a friend. **Often outside perspectives can bring more clarity to your own life.** There are many factors that contribute to anxiety, so it may be hard to identify your specific triggers. Try to understand at least a few of your triggers, even if you can't identify them all.



RESPONDING TO TRIGGERS

Once you understand what makes you anxious, it can be easy to want to avoid those situations in the future. In some cases, this may even be appropriate, like if you're triggered by consuming too much caffeine. Other triggers, when avoided, can impact your life and even make your anxiety worse. For example, you may feel anxious when talking to new people. If you choose to avoid this situation, you will not feel the anxiety from talking to new people, but you may begin to feel anxious about not having friends.

Avoiding every situation that makes you anxious will not fix the problem, instead you should find coping strategies that you can use when facing that situation in the future.



Using a coping method before or during a stressful situation can help you to feel less anxious and more in control. Remember that not all coping methods work for everyone, and even a coping method that works for you in some situations may not work in others. This is why it is so important to at least be aware of multiple coping methods. For example, if you know that you tend to feel anxious during meetings at work, consider taking a calming walk before you need to go to your meeting. During the meeting you can practice a breathing exercise.

Triggers can be simple to identify, like a fear of snakes, or much more complicated. When you are working to identify your own triggers, be patient and do not pass judgement on yourself. When you have an idea of what tends to trigger your anxiety, use coping tools that work for you to make these situations more manageable.

WORKSHEET: IDENTIFYING ANXIETY TRIGGERS

In this worksheet you will practice identifying anxious thoughts, situations, and possible triggers. You will also identify coping skills.

Note: List of Coping Skills on next page.

EXAMPLE

ANXIOUS THOUGHT	SITUATION	POSSIBLE TRIGGERS	COPING SKILL(S) TO TRY
<i>None of my friends like me anymore.</i>	<i>Nobody is responding to me in the group chat, but they were all messaging a bit ago.</i>	<i>Feeling alone, feeling ignored</i>	<i>Going for a walk and leaving your phone at home or at your desk.</i>
<i>I'm going to get very sick or die.</i>	<i>Looking up symptoms online and it being linked to something scary.</i>	<i>Stress, Health Concerns, Uncertainty</i>	<i>Journaling, Bilateral Stimulation, Meditation</i>

RESOURCE:

ANXIETY TRIGGERS & COPING SKILLS

We have provided a list of common triggers and healthy coping skills to help you get started.

COMMON ANXIETY TRIGGERS:

- Health concerns
- Financial challenges
- Medications
- Caffeine and other substances
- Skipped meals
- Negative thinking
- Social Interactions
- Pressure at work/school
- General Stress
- Large events or gatherings
- Personal triggers (trauma)
- Phobias
- Relationship conflicts
- Politics
- Natural Disasters
- Uncertainty
- Emotional Trauma
- Death of loved ones
- Death of a pet
- Lack of oxygen
- General or specific fears
- Public Speaking
- Performing
- Insecurities
- Work conflicts

ADD YOUR OWN

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COMMON COPING SKILLS:

- Exercise
- Writing
- Journaling
- Scribbling
- Art
- Watching TV
- Watching a movie
- Doing a wordsearch
- Playing an instrument
- Practicing a skill
- Doing your makeup
- Take a hot shower
- Play with your pet
- Read a book
- Listen to a podcast
- Listen to music
- Clean your space
- Organize something
- Meditate
- Do Yoga
- Start a new hobby
- DIY something
- Call a friend or family member
- Go to a store and look around
- Play a sport
- Write a letter to a friend
- Cook or bake
- Go for a drive
- Partake in a faith practice
- Identify things you are grateful for
- Watch nature
- Try to memorize a song
- Make lists of things
- Do self care activities
- Do something kind
- Rearrange your furniture
- Research a new topic
- Make a list of your goals
- Bilateral Stimulation
- Snap a rubberband on your arm or leg
- Hold an ice cube

ADD YOUR OWN

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