

EIGHT 60-SECOND ANXIETY RELIEF TOOLS FOR KIDS BIG AND SMALL

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1 Breathe



Research shows rapid and shallow breathing are often part of the stress response. Reverse the response with deep, slow breathing.

Try breathing in deeply through your nose and then exhaling fully through your mouth. Continue this practice for one minute.

This type of breathing sends a message from your body to your mind that there is no present danger... you can go from fight-or-flight to rest-and-digest mode.

2 Drink Water



Approximately 55 to 75 percent of our bodies are composed of water.

Water helps deliver vitamins and nutrients to their proper destinations, helps eliminate waste, and helps our systems function properly.

In fact, by the time you're thirsty, you're already dehydrated. And research reveals that even mild dehydration can affect mental well-being and increase anxiety. Water helps. One study showed students who took water into their testing hall scored nearly 10 percent better than those who did not.

3 Hug a Loved One



A hug, or even holding hands with a loved one, can melt stress away.

Studies show that hugging both slows the release of stress hormones such as cortisol and releases good hormones such as oxytocin (a.k.a., the "cuddle" or "love" hormone responsible for social bonding).

As an added bonus, studies also show hugs can act as a protective force against illness.

4 Be Mindful



Research shows that 47 percent of the time, we're actually thinking about something other than what we're doing.

This research also reveals that thinking about the past or future is more likely to trigger anxiety than focusing on the present.

Try this: Focus on the present by asking questions about your five senses. What do you feel, see, hear, smell, and taste right now?

5 Witness Love



An interesting study asked participants to view pictures representing love and support. Then, researchers used functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to measure how the brain responded.

It turns out viewing pictures of others being cared for can soothe anxiety. And for those who are especially anxious, the pictures of love and support can be even more effective.

6

Reframe Stress



A little stress is OK.



A little stress in your life is okay.

In fact, there is something known as eustress (good stress), and studies show that awareness of this type of stress can help lower levels of cortisol and even boost productivity.

In other words, your mindset regarding stress influences how your mind and body react to it.

Tell yourself that a little bit of stress is actually OK.

7

Keep it Real



From an evolutionary perspective, the stress response is a built-in protection mechanism. Stress or worry is what kept the cave person attuned to the saber-toothed cat lurking in the bush.

And to make sure we were really paying attention, the mind often exaggerated the object of the worry (e.g., mistaking a stick for a snake).

This tendency to magnify what might go wrong remains with us and is a common cognitive distortion. Research shows that one of the best ways to bring yourself back from a distorted reality is self-disputation. When you have an anxious thought, ask yourself this question: Is my thought really true?

8

Laugh



The benefits of laughter are well documented. In fact, there is an entire field dedicated to the science called Gelotology. Here are some of the major findings from the field: laughter can relax muscles, improve respiration and circulation, stimulate the production of endorphins (natural pain killers), and decrease stress-related hormones. In short, laughing is a great elixir for stress and anxiety.

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