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Caregiving in The Comfort of Home®

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Caregiver Assistance News

"CARING FOR YOU...CARING FOR OTHERS"

Mental Health – Managing Stress

Everyone feels worried sometimes. You might feel nervous before a work interview, a doctor's visit, or financial problems. These feelings are normal. *Anxiety* is your body's way of trying to protect you. It warns you when something feels unsafe or important.

But sometimes anxiety shows up even when there is no real danger. It can make your heart race, your hands shake, or your stomach hurt. It may also make it hard to think clearly or enjoy everyday life. The good news is that there are many simple ways to calm anxiety and feel more in control.

Simple Ways to Calm Anxiety and Feel Better

One of the best ways to calm your body is by taking **slow, deep breaths**. When you are anxious, you often breathe too fast or too shallow. This tells your brain that something is wrong. Instead, breathe in slowly through your nose and breathe out even more slowly through your mouth. A longer exhale helps your body relax. After a few deep breaths, you may notice your heart slowing down and your muscles feeling less tense.

Another helpful idea is to pay attention to what is happening around you. Anxiety often pulls your thoughts into the future. You may start worrying about things that have not even happened yet. A **grounding exercise** can bring you back to the present. Try the 5-4-3-2-1 method. Find five things you can see, four things you can touch, three things you can hear, two things you can smell, and one thing you can taste. This simple activity helps your brain focus on what is real instead of what you fear.



Your thoughts also play a big role in anxiety. Sometimes your mind tells you that the worst thing will happen. Instead of believing every worried thought, remind yourself **that thoughts are not always facts**. You can say, "*I'm having the thought that something bad might happen.*" This small change helps you see your thoughts without letting them control you. Many times, the scary thing never happens.

Positive words can also help calm your mind. These are called *affirmations* or *mantras*. You might say, *"I am safe," "I can handle this,"* or *"This feeling will pass."* Saying these words reminds your brain that you are stronger than your anxiety. Even if you do not believe the words at first, repeating them can help you feel more confident over time.

Sometimes anxiety makes people want to hide from others. They may stay home or keep their feelings to themselves. But talking with someone you trust can make a big difference. A friend, family member, or a therapist can listen and offer support. **Sharing your feelings** does not make you weak. It shows courage and helps you feel less alone.

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It is also important to **take care of your body**. Getting enough sleep, eating healthy foods, drinking water, and exercising can all improve your mood. Even taking a short walk outside can help lower stress. Fresh air and movement give your brain a chance to reset.

If you start feeling overwhelmed, try **doing one small task** instead of thinking about everything at once. You might clean your desk, answer one email, or take a five-minute walk. Small steps help you feel successful and remind you that you can move forward, even when life feels difficult.

Being kind to yourself is another important habit. Many people criticize themselves when they feel anxious. They may think they should be stronger or stop worrying. Instead, speak to yourself the way you would speak to a good friend. Remind yourself that everyone struggles sometimes. Being patient with yourself helps reduce stress instead of adding more.

Older adults often face extra challenges that can increase anxiety. Retirement, health problems, losing loved ones, or feeling lonely can make life harder. Some older people believe they should hide their feelings because of how mental health was viewed in the past. However, anxiety and depression are not signs of weakness. They are health conditions that can be treated. Family members and caregivers can help by listening, offering support, and encouraging older adults to talk with their doctors.

Some people try to calm anxiety with unhealthy habits like drinking alcohol, smoking, drugs or avoiding their problems. These choices may seem to help for a short time, but they often make anxiety worse later. Healthy coping skills, such as deep breathing, exercise, talking with others, or practicing relaxation, are much better choices.

Remember that anxiety is a normal part of life, but it does not have to control your future. Learning a few simple tools can help you feel calmer and stronger. Every time you practice these skills, you teach your brain that you can handle difficult feelings. You do not have to face anxiety alone. With support, healthy habits, and practice, you can learn to manage anxiety and enjoy life with greater confidence and peace.

Source: Cleveland Clinic; Joshua Coleman, PhD

Anger and Sadness Increase Pain

Anger and sadness can both hurt deeply—emotionally and even physically. Scientists found that when people are angry or sad, they feel more pain.

If you, or the person in your care, are in pain, depression or anger can make you feel even worse. Many people, especially elders, tend to hide negative emotions, but keeping sadness or irritation inside can make painful conditions worse. Recognize your emotions and express them in a healthy way that makes you feel better.

It's normal for a person to be upset or depressed when not feeling well, but in some cases improving *mood* can make pain less intense. Learning new ways to cope with sadness and anger can help a person cope better with illness and pain—and caregiving.

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Taking Care of Yourself— The Second Arrow of Suffering

When an arrow strikes you, you feel intense pain, but if a second arrow strikes you in the same spot, the pain you feel is not double but ten times worse. Losing someone you love is the first arrow. You feel the acute pain of loss and sorrow. But worrying, being anxious, or succumbing to despair are like the second arrow.



When you are in pain, breathe in and out and recognize the pain, but don't exaggerate it. Don't allow the second arrow to strike. Our guilt, remorse, and regrets are the second arrows we often fire at ourselves.

Source: No Mud, No Lotus; Thích Nhất Hạnh

Live Life Laughing!

I decided I'm going to have—
what used to be good for me—
but now is bad for me…



Inspiration

THINK!
Is it True?
Is it Helpful?
Is it Inspiring?
Is it Necessary?
Is it Kind?

Memory Care - Limits

Whether you care for a person with Alzheimer's or *you* have been diagnosed with Alzheimer's, it is important you establish boundaries and let others know your limits. What are you willing to tolerate and what are you not? Be as open as possible about this with others.

Caregiving in The Comfort of Home®

Our Purpose

To provide caregivers with critical information enabling them to do their job with confidence, pride, and competence.

Ordering Info

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SAFETY TIPS– Combative Behavior

Nothing feels more frustrating and stressful when working hard to care for someone who argues, refuses to follow directions, and is even verbally abusive. Sometimes these are the behaviors that accompany diseases such as Alzheimer's. Other times, the person is frustrated by feeling sick or without control over many aspects of his life, and takes these frustrations out on those around him, especially the caregiver.

First, try to diffuse the anger. You will have to experiment to see what works best with the person in your care. You can try:

- **Humor**—Making light of the situation, but not the person.
- **Empathy**—"*I see how upset you are and I understand*."
- **Changing the Subject**—Address what he is saying briefly and then move on to a different topic.
- **Take a Break**—Tell the person you have a task to take care of in another room and that you'll discuss the issue in a little while. This will give him time to cool down and you a chance to take some deep breaths to get centered again.

NEXT ISSUE…SLEEP DISTURBANCES IN ALZHEIMER'S

Caregiver Assistance News

"CARING FOR YOU ... CARING FOR OTHERS"

QUICK QUIZ

The CDC reports that, following disasters such as—storms, heat waves, and wildfires—mental health problems often increase among both people with *no* history of mental illness and those already at risk, with effects that may be temporary or long-lasting. Answer True or False to the questions below.

1. Getting enough sleep, eating healthy foods, drinking water, and exercising can all improve your mood.
T F

2. One of the best ways to calm your body is by taking slow, deep breaths.
T F

3. Instead of believing every worried thought, remind yourself that thoughts are not always facts.
T F

4. Older adults do not face extra challenges that can increase anxiety.
T F

5. To diffuse the anger in the person in your care, you will have to experiment to see what works best.
T F

6. It's normal for a person to be upset or depressed when not feeling well, but in some cases improving *mood* can make pain less intense.
T F

7. Many people, especially elders, tend to hide negative emotions, but keeping sadness or irritation inside can make painful conditions worse.
T F

8. Some people try to calm anxiety with unhealthy habits like drinking alcohol, smoking, drugs or avoiding their problems. These choices may seem to help for a short time, but they often make anxiety worse later.
T F

9. Saying words such as *affirmations* or *mantras* reminds your brain that you are stronger than your anxiety. Even if you do not believe the words at first, repeating them can help you feel more confident over time.
T F

10. Anxiety can show up even when there is no real danger. It can make your heart race, your hands shake, or your stomach hurt.
T F

Name _____

Signature _____ Date _____

KEY: 1. T; 2. T; 3. T; 4. F; 5. T; 6. T; 7. T; 8. T; 9. T; 10. T

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