

# Why Am I So Anxious for No Reason?

Pssst, turns out there actually is a reason

By Wendy Wisner | Updated on July 11, 2024

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We often wish anxiety was something that made sense. Sure, there are plenty of instances when being anxious is totally legit, like maybe your partner hasn't gotten home yet or you're waiting to hear if you landed that job you really want. But if you're someone who's wound a little tighter, the anxious feelings don't always align with reason—Your heart is suddenly racing, palms sweating, seemingly out of nowhere. So what gives?

Here's what no one tells you about anxiety: you can get anxious over *\*anything\**. It's actually very normal (even if it sucks). Not only is it normal, but it is one of the primary ways that anxiety presents itself, says Rachel Brown, LCPC, a licensed clinical professional counselor at OSF HealthCare. “Most of the time, anxiety comes on for no apparent reason,” she explains.

Still, these random moments of anxiety *are* more common for people living with anxiety disorders. “Feeling anxiety without a clear trigger or reason can be a normal occurrence for people who suffer from anxiety disorders,” says Rachel Goldberg, LMFT, therapist and founder of Rachel Goldberg Therapy.

Goldberg assures that experiencing this is normal, and you aren't making these feelings up. You need to remember: just because you don't know what's causing the anxiety doesn't mean it isn't real. So let's get into the nitty-gritty to try and understand it a little bit better.

## Where the Random Anxiety Could Be Coming From

Having anxiety for no reason that you can pinpoint is, well...anxiety-producing in and of itself. When you find yourself wondering, “Why am I anxious for no reason?” you aren't just disturbed by the anxious feelings you are feeling, but by the fact that you can't figure out what's causing them. You want answers, and you want to feel better.

## Some Possible Causes

- Hormone fluctuations
- Social and environmental factors
- Anticipation (even if its a good thing)
- An unresolved issue you aren't aware of

There are a variety of things that can cause a person to feel anxious for no apparent reason, says Brown. “For example, women are more likely to experience intrusive thoughts due to fluctuations in hormones,” she describes. “Social and environmental factors such as childhood trauma, lack of resources, limited socialization, stressful work, school and home life situations can also make someone vulnerable to anxiety.”

Mysterious bouts of anxiety can be confusing because sometimes they are actually triggered by something positive or the anticipation of something positive happening in the future. “For example, someone might feel anxious about an upcoming trip, despite loving travel,” says Goldberg. “Their body, however, might react similarly to excitement as it does to fear, which can confuse the person to attribute their symptoms to anxiety rather than positive anticipation.”

Another common cause is an unresolved issue that you may not be aware of consciously. “Perhaps you had a tiff with their partner, and although you both apologized and hugged before parting ways, there may still be unresolved feelings from the argument,” Goldberg describes. Additionally, learned responses from past traumas can be triggered by things that you aren’t consciously aware of, Goldberg adds.

Finally, you can’t underestimate the impact of lifestyle and physiological factors on feelings of anxiety. For example, the following can cause feelings of anxiety, according to Goldberg:

- Excessive caffeine consumption
- Lack of sleep
- Hormonal fluctuations
- Not properly fueling your body
- Changes in your medications

## Is This Normal?

When anxiety seems to flood you suddenly or for no reason, you probably want to know if this is a normal thing, or something to be concerned about.

First, Brown emphasizes that not all anxiety is a bad thing. There is helpful anxiety and unhelpful anxiety. "Helpful anxiety could motivate us to be on time for work so that we don't get fired, pay our bills to keep our housing or engage in exercise to reduce the risk of heart disease," Brown describes.

"Unhelpful anxiety may have us ruminate on paying the bills so much that we avoid paying them because we are so anxious," Brown says. Additionally, something that starts as helpful anxiety gets out of control and changes into unhelpful anxiety.

How do you know if your anxiety is becoming a problem? It has to do with how that anxiety is impacting your day-to-day life. Unexplained anxiety in and of itself doesn't mean something is wrong, or that the anxiety can't be reduced, Goldberg says.

"However, if it is happening often, it would be helpful to address it so that it doesn't become a regular occurrence that consumes space and energy or interferes with their daily functioning," she recommends.

## 11 Ways to Reduce Anxiety

Regardless of what's triggering the unexplained anxiety, you want relief. Thankfully, there are some things you can do to feel better in the moment when you are feeling anxious and hopefully reduce anxiety in the future.

Here's what Goldberg and other experts suggest:

- Incorporate exercise into your day, which can help use up some excess energy
- Maintain good sleep habits
- Limit alcohol and caffeine
- Try journaling as a way to explore and express your feelings
- Add yoga or meditation into your day to slow down brain activity
- Incorporate daily routines to reduce unpredictability, which can increase anxiety

What to do if the anxiety is happening right now? While nothing is a magic bullet, there are things you can do to quiet the anxiety while it's happening, Brown says.

Doing some deep breathing can help stop anxiety in its tracks or at least reduce its hold on you, says Brown. Techniques like deep belly breathing and box breathing (where you inhale for four counts, hold for four, exhale for four, and hold again) can be very helpful. "By introducing a surplus of oxygen into your brain, your parasympathetic

nervous system sends out an ‘it’s okay, you’re safe’ message which aids relaxation,” Brown explains.

Another technique to consider for calming yourself during a bout of anxiety is aromatherapy, which can involve picking any essential oils you find relaxing and diffusing them in the room where you are. If you can meditate in the moment, that can help calm your nervous system. Brown says you can find a simple meditation on YouTube and just sit for a few minutes with it.

Talking things out with a friend or loved one can be cathartic as well. And don’t underestimate the power of laughter. “Allow moments of humor,” Brown recommends. “Laughing can do wonders.”

## When to Seek Professional Help

If the anxiety you are feeling is extremely intense or taking over your life, you shouldn’t try to solve this on your own. If your anxiety is impacting your social life, work life, or ability to function, it’s time to talk to a mental health professional, says Brown.

“For example, you’ve been feeling so anxious that your appetite has decreased to the point where you are rapidly losing weight,” Brown describes. “Or, you’re having many nights of little or no sleep due to racing thoughts.” Whatever it is, if you are having a difficult time, it never hurts to seek professional help, Brown emphasizes.

## Keep in Mind

If you are grappling with the question, “Why I am so anxious,” you are probably not only feeling anxious but feeling anxious about the anxiety, which can end up putting you in an endless anxiety loop. It’s important to work on understanding your anxiety, work on preventing it, and seek mental health support if the anxiety is preventing you from living a full life.

But it can also be helpful to remember that we all feel anxious from time to time and it’s a part of being human. “I always tell people to picture anxiety as your shadow,” Brown says. “We can’t get away from it, so instead of trying to run, just acknowledge that it’s there.” In some ways, acceptance is the best medicine for anxiety, Brown says.

### 9 Sources

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