# The Difference Between Stress and Anxiety (International Stress Awareness Day, November 6)

Many people think that the words stress and anxiety mean the same thing. [Stress](https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/2023/collective-trauma-recovery) is a normal part of life that is expected during life’s ups and downs. Stress can certainly be hard to manage, but it usually goes away after some time. While stress and anxiety are similar, [anxiety](https://psychcentral.com/anxiety/anxiety-facts) is a more intense, longer-lasting feeling of fear, dread, or worry. Sometimes, these feelings will become so strong that they will affect all areas of the person’s life. When anxiety reaches levels where they are affecting a person’s quality of life, this is when anxiety turns into an [anxiety disorder](https://adaa.org/understanding-anxiety/facts-statistics).

As we previously mentioned, stress and anxiety have similar symptoms, risks, and signs. Stress comes when we have feelings of anxious thoughts and feelings of fear. When someone feels stressed, they can usually identify where it is coming from. If they can identify their stress triggers, they can research coping strategies to help them cope. This can be done with a counselor or without. It can be helpful to discuss these techniques with a counselor if that is possible. There are many [relaxation techniques](https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/relaxation-technique/art-20045368) out there to help people cope with their stress in a way that works best for them. Some examples of activities that may promote relaxation are breathing techniques, yoga, meditation, and art or music therapy.

On the other hand, anxiety brings feelings of dread, restlessness, difficulty concentrating, and irritability. The main difference between anxiety and stress is that anxiety does not always have a clear cause. Anxiety can be challenging to figure out because of this. Feelings of anxiety can sometimes last far longer than when originally triggered. If anxiety persists during a person's life, they have the risk of developing an anxiety disorder. Anxiety disorders are serious mental health disorders that involve such strong feelings of anxiety that they interfere with the person’s daily life. There is no specific cause for anxiety, but researchers believe it’s a mixture of genetic, environmental, and social factors.

Both stress and anxiety can be treated in therapy. The course of treatment for both will be determined by the patient’s levels of anxiety and how it’s affecting their lives. There are several different types of treatment for anxiety. The most common treatments include a mix of medication, psychotherapy, and lifestyle changes. All of these help the patient to find ways to manage and express their anxiety in healthier ways. Another common way to treat anxiety is through [Cognitive Behavioral Therapy](https://michiganpsychologicalcare.com/blog/cognitive-behavioral-therapy.php) (CBT) with an in-person or online counselor. CBT helps patients identify their negative thoughts and reframe them into more positive ones. This type of therapy also teaches the importance of knowing how your thoughts affect your emotions. [Teletherapy](https://adaa.org/learn-from-us/from-the-experts/blog-posts/consumer/top-ten-teletherapy-tips-kids-teens) can be a great option for people who are nervous about meeting up with a therapist in an office.

Living with persistent stress, anxiety, or even an anxiety disorder can be exceedingly difficult if left untreated. Living a life consumed by these fears and feelings is not a life lived to the fullest. If you or someone you love might be struggling with stress, anxiety, or an anxiety disorder, help is available. If you are interested in learning more about [treatment](https://michiganpsychologicalcare.com/services/anxiety-treatment.php), you can [reach](https://michiganpsychologicalcare.com/contact.php) out to us here.

**References**

<https://psychcentral.com/anxiety/anxiety-facts>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/relaxation-technique/art-20045368>

<https://adaa.org/learn-from-us/from-the-experts/blog-posts/consumer/top-ten-teletherapy-tips-kids-teens>

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