

Anxiety, Depression, & Stress

or Do you have the mid-term blues?

Welcome to College

Much of the material for this presentation taken from HELPGUIDE.ORG,
a very useful resource.

I. Anxiety – *Worry Gone Wild*

- **The Positive:** Certain levels of anxiety are normal and even healthy – it can sharpen our focus, prepare us for the “what if’s” and “worst case scenarios”, it can cause us to work harder / study more in order to avoid negative outcomes.
- **The Negative:** High levels of anxiety can be paralyzing, sap our energy, hinder healthy sleep, feel out of control, damage our relationships, it can become a very serious mental disorder.

Anxiety – *Worry Gone Wild*

Reasons that keep people from giving up their worries:

1. “If I keep thinking (worrying) about this, I’ll eventually figure it out.”
2. “I don’t want to be surprised by things I haven’t thought (worried) through completely.”
3. “I need to control my life to prevent negative outcomes.”
4. “I want to be responsible for my life and actions.”
5. “I need to avoid embarrassing and hurtful situations.”

Learning to Control Anxiety

Anxiety/Worrying can sometimes be controlled or limited by applying the following self-help guidelines adapted from

HELPGUIDE.ORG/mental/anxiety :

1. Don't deny the reality of your anxiety. Create a worry period and a worry list. In doing so a person creates a way to postpone the "worry" thus asserting a control over it. ("I can't deal with this now; I'll deal with it at a specific later time." *This could include a bedside notepad.*)
2. Analyze whether or not this current problem has a solution within your control. Is this problem real or imagined? If real, can I actually solve it?

Learning to Control Anxiety

3. Learn to accept uncertainty. Life is messy! Worrying cannot predict the future with 100% accuracy. Focusing on future “worst-case scenarios” will rob a person from experiencing the joy & happiness of the present.
4. Major in reality:
 - a. *The past cannot be changed.*
 - b. *Most of our fears never happen.*
5. Challenge anxious thoughts. Check to see if you possess cognitive distortions or “stinking thinking” that breed irrational thoughts and pessimistic attitudes.

This process probably needs another person’s perspective – choose that person wisely – they must be trustworthy and firmly attached to reality.

Cognitive Distortions: Additions to Anxiety, Worry, & Stress

1. All-or-Nothing Thinking - Looking at things with only either / or categories, no middle ground.
2. Overgeneralization - Generalizing from a single negative experience – “Since I got a bad grade on the first test, I’m going to fail the course.”
3. The Negative Mental Filter - Focusing on the negatives while filtering out **all** the positive things about self and life.
4. Diminishing the Positive – Making up reasons why positive events do not count ... “it was just dumb luck.”
5. Jumping to Conclusions – Using negative interpretations without actual evidence.
6. Catastrophizing – Expecting the worst-case scenario to happen ... most of the time.
7. Emotional Reasoning – Believing that the way you feel actually reflects reality.
8. Shoulds & Should Not's – Living life with a strict list of rules ... condemning self when they are broken.
9. Labeling – Labeling yourself based on mistakes and perceived shortcomings ... “Loser” “Idiot” “Dummy”
10. Personalization – Taking responsibility for things that are outside of your control.

Learning to Control Anxiety

5. Live in the present rather than worry about the future
 - Discipline your thoughts by putting into practice the following:
 - a. Acknowledge and observe your anxious thoughts and emotions. *Don't ignore, fight, or try to control those anxious thoughts but try observing them as an outside person would.*
 - b. Let go of your worries. *When a person doesn't try to control those anxious thoughts, they tend to drift away like a cloud moving across the sky.*
 - c. Stay focused on the present. *Bring your attention back to the present moment by practicing controlled breathing, focusing on the way your body feels, or on your changing emotions.*

II. Depression

Depression is far more common than many people believe. Two large-category causes of depression are: 1) situational things in life (like a death of a loved one or the loss of a close relationship) and 2) an imbalance of our body-chemistry or brain-chemistry.

The nine classic symptoms of a Major Depressive

Episode from the DSM-5: (at least five of the following nine symptoms are present during the same two-week period)

1. Depressed mood most of the day, nearly every day.
2. A markedly diminished interest or pleasure in all, or almost all, activities nearly every day.
3. A significant weight loss (when not dieting) or weight gain [an appetite disturbance].

Depression

4. Insomnia **or** hypersomnia nearly every day [a sleep disturbance].
5. Psychomotor agitation **or** retardation nearly every day.
6. Fatigue or loss of energy nearly every day.
7. Feelings of worthlessness or excessive / inappropriate guilt (which may be delusional) nearly every day.
8. Diminished ability to think or concentrate, or indecisiveness nearly every day. (This symptom makes being a student very difficult.)
9. Recurrent thoughts of death (not just a fear of dying), recurrent suicidal ideation without a specific plan, or a suicide attempt or a specific plan for committing suicide.

These symptoms may be noticed by the person experiencing depression (subjective report) or noticed by others (objective report).

Differences between male and female depression

Depression manifests itself somewhat differently in men and women:

Women tend to:

Men tend to:

Blame themselves Blame others

Feel sad, apathetic and worthless Feel angry, irritable and ego inflated

Feel anxious and scared Feel suspicious and guarded

Avoid conflicts at all costs Create conflicts

Feel slowed down and nervous Feel restless and agitated

Have trouble setting boundaries Need to feel in control at all costs

Use food, friends, and love to self-medicate Use alcohol, TV, sports, and sex to self-medicate

Find it easy to talk about self-doubt and despair Find it “weak” to talk about self-doubt and despair

Treating Depression

Depression is a very treatable mental / emotional disturbance that many people, if not most people, will experience sometime in life.

- Treatments for depression vary and do not necessarily include medication
- Treatment may include counseling (talk therapy), light therapy, developing a depression management plan, lifestyle changes, medication or a combination of these options.
- Symptoms of depression can be caused by thyroid problems – a physical exam by a physician is highly recommended.
- Depression can be genetic and passed on from one generation to the next.
- When medications are prescribed, they need to be monitored carefully.
- Anti-Depressants are not “happy pills” and may be necessary to correct chemical imbalances in the body / brain.
- Pretending that depression isn’t real does not help a person recover the quality of life that makes living a pleasure to one’s self **and those around us.**

Depression & Suicidal Ideation

This slide is designed for a person who is experiencing depression.

- Although a symptom of depression, suicidal ideation is not a symptom that can be ignored.
- No one should feel guilty due to suicidal thoughts because it is a part of the disorder called depression.
- Suicidal thinking is a “red flag” “a cry for help” that needs to be addressed immediately.
- Life can and does get better for people with depression when they get appropriate help and follow a healthy treatment plan.
- Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem – it need not happen even though suicidal thinking does not allow for other solutions to become apparent ... **without outside help.**
- Get help!

Signs of Suicide

This information is designed for the family, friends, and acquaintances of potential suicide victims.

A person who:

- ☐ has been down in the dumps for a long while
- ☐ seems to have lost HOPE [Why should I go on living?]
- ☐ talks about harming or killing themselves
- ☐ mentions their own death verbally or in written form i.e., postings
- ☐ is self-medicating with alcohol or marijuana
- ☐ has recently experienced a tough time ... a failing grade, the fear of being a failure, the death of a family member or friend, the end of a relationship
- ☐ is giving away treasured items
- ☐ is suddenly and dramatically happier after a prolonged period of depression

Ask the question! "Are you thinking of harming yourself?" "Are you thinking of killing yourself?"

Please do NOT be sworn to secrecy ... suicide is not confidentially protected speech! If in doubt, get help by talking to a professional by yourself. Offer to go with your friend to get help.

III. Stress – *a normal part of life*

- Like anxiety, stress is a normal part of life and it can be beneficial – it can be a motivator causing us to be more focused on the task at hand, allowing us to do more than we thought possible and prodding us to meet deadlines.
- High levels of stress can become overwhelming and cause a person to shut down, give up, or want to run away.
- Stress can be managed in healthy ways thus allowing a person to function in a normal relative happy manner.
- Some people choose unhealthy ways to try to manage stress that cause more stress and harm to them and others around them.
- Major sources of stress: External & Internal

Managing Stress

Both Types of Stress – Internal and External

Healthy stress management includes some of the following:

Strategy #1: *Avoid Stressful Situations*

1. Learning how to say “no”
2. Avoiding people who stress you out
3. Taking control of your environment
4. Avoiding topics that induce stress whenever possible
5. Attempt to be realistic about what you are able to accomplish in a given amount of time ... thus back to #1 ↑
6. Learning to control the self-talk of “if I would’ve”, “I should’ve”, & “ I could’ve”

Managing Stress

Strategy #2: *Alter Stressful Situations*

1. Express your thoughts / feelings in an open and respectful manner
2. Seek a middle ground by being willing to compromise
3. Deal with issues head on by being more assertive
4. Learn to attack the **problem** not the *person*
5. Learn good time management by planning ahead and not overextending yourself

Strategy #3: *Adapt to the Stressor*

6. If the stressor cannot be changed, change yourself
7. Reframe the problem by gaining a new & different perspective on it
8. Consider the Big Picture view - will this matter in a month or two
9. Ask, "Is this the hill I am willing to die on?"

Managing Stress

5. Adjust your standards – perfectionism is a huge stressor in itself and no person can be perfect and no situation is perfect ... in the real world
6. Focus on the positive – balance negative thoughts and events with looking at the positive things about yourself and life
7. Adjust your attitude – the way a person thinks has a profound effect on how they experience life – try to avoid self-defeating words like: “always,” “never,” “should,” and “must.”

Strategy #4: Accept the things you cannot change

8. Do not try to control the uncontrollable
9. Look for the upside – when facing major challenges try to see them as opportunities for personal growth and development

Managing Stress

3. Talk to a trusted person – a good friend or a therapist – expressing our thoughts and feelings to another person can be very cathartic
4. **Learn to forgive ... others as well as yourself** – since we live in an imperfect world, all human beings make mistakes ... including yourself

FORGIVENESS 101

What Forgiveness is NOT:

- It isn't denying what happened
- It isn't pretending what happened wasn't hurtful / harmful
- It isn't denying your right to be angry – anger often is an expression of pain
- It doesn't mean you need to place yourself in “harms way” again
- It isn't necessarily “forgetting” – forgetting may take many years or forever

Managing Stress

FORGIVENESS 101 cont.

What Forgiveness is:

- Willfully choosing to let go of the incident and eventually its memory
- Realizing my anger will not hurt / harm the offender, but could kill me
- A conscience effort of letting go of my desire to control the past
- A strong desire to move on and beyond “the incident”

Strategy #5: Make time for enjoyment, fun, and relaxation

1. Do something you enjoy every day
2. Have a sense of humor – laugh often, help others to laugh, laugh at yourself – laughing helps your body fight stress in numerous ways

Managing Stress

3. Connect with other people, help someone less fortunate; brighten someone's day
4. Take a break – make time for relaxation and fun, don't let other obligations crowd out your rest and relaxation time

Strategy #6: *Adopt a healthy lifestyle*

5. Exercise regularly
6. Eat a healthy diet
7. Limit caffeine & sugar intake
8. Avoid alcohol, cigarettes, & drugs
9. Get enough sleep

Summary

- o Find out what is causing anxiety, depression, and/or stress in your life.
- o Look for ways to reduce its impact in your life.
- o Learn healthy ways to relieve anxiety, cope with depression, and/or alleviate stress.
- o Find better ways to cope.
- o Take good care of yourself.
- o Try new ways of thinking.

Final thought: if we do not learn to control these things in our lives ... they may very well end up controlling