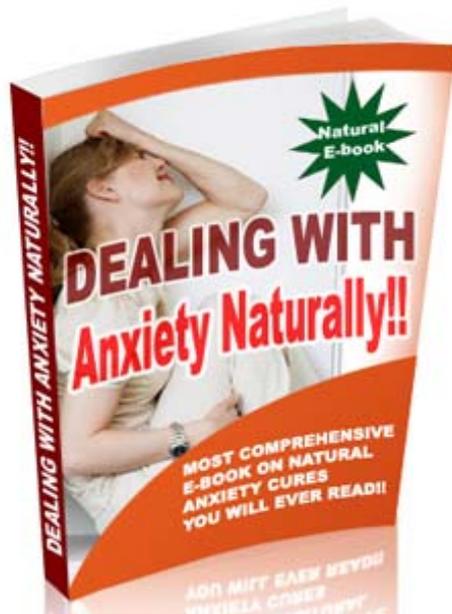


Dealing With Anxiety Naturally!!



By

<http://www.Natural-Cures-Ebooks.com>

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Disclaimer: Always consult a qualified medical practitioner before starting on any new treatment or medication.

The content contained within this book has been written through personal experiences and as a result of research carried out by me over a course of time. It is merely my opinion based on my experiences. I am not, nor claim to be a medical doctor. This information should only be used as a guide to the options you have available to sure your anxiety. I do not in any form or manner advocate discontinuing your current medications. Always consult a medical doctor's opinion before changing your current diet in any way.

This book is for informational purposes only.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	5
OVERVIEW	6
THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ANXIETY AND PANIC.....	7
YOU, ANXIETY AND PANIC.....	7
PUT IT ALL IN PERSPECTIVE	8
WHAT IS ANXIETY AND PANIC DISORDER?	9
WHAT CAN YOU DO ABOUT IT?	10
HOW TO COPE WITH AN ATTACK.....	11
<i>Breathing Properly.....</i>	11
<i>Relaxation</i>	12
<i>Phone a Friend.....</i>	13
REASONS FOR ANXIETY AND PANIC ATTACKS	14
TRAUMATIC EVENT.....	14
<i>Older Traumatic Event</i>	14
<i>Recent Traumatic Events</i>	15
IS IT HEREDITARY?.....	16
WHICH CATEGORY DO YOU FALL INTO?.....	17
PANIC ATTACK	17
<i>Symptoms</i>	18
PANIC DISORDER	18
<i>Symptoms</i>	19
AGORAPHOBIA	20
<i>Symptoms</i>	20
GENERALIZED ANXIETY DISORDER	21
<i>Symptoms</i>	21
SPECIFIC PHOBIA	22
<i>Symptoms</i>	23
SOCIAL ANXIETY	23
<i>Symptoms</i>	24
OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER.....	24
<i>Symptoms</i>	26
CHILDREN AND ANXIETY	26
<i>Separation Anxiety Disorder.....</i>	28
<i>Selective Mutism</i>	28
<i>Symptoms of Anxiety in Children</i>	29
POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER.....	30

<i>Symptoms</i>	31
SIDE-EFFECTS OF ANXIETY DISORDERS	31
DEPRESSION.....	32
SUBSTANCE ABUSE.....	32
CURING YOUR ANXIETY AND PANIC DISORDERS.....	34
MEDICINAL TREATMENTS.....	34
START WITH AN ACCURATE DIAGNOSIS	35
TREATMENTS	35
<i>Benzodiazepines</i>	35
<i>SSRI - Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors</i>	36
<i>Buspirone</i>	37
<i>Azaspirones</i>	37
<i>Beta Blockers</i>	37
<i>Tricyclics</i>	38
<i>Monoamine Oxidase Inhibitors –MAOI's</i>	38
IF YOU CAN'T AFFORD MEDICATION	38
VITAMINS AND MINERALS IN SUPPLEMENTAL FORM.....	39
NATURAL TREATMENTS	40
HERBAL REMEDIES	40
<i>Chamomile</i>	41
<i>Valerian</i>	42
<i>Lavender</i>	42
<i>St John's Wort</i>	42
<i>Kava Kava</i>	43
<i>Passion Flower</i>	43
<i>Motherwort</i>	43
<i>Lemon Balm</i>	44
<i>Linden</i>	44
<i>Oat Straw</i>	45
<i>Skullcap (Scullcap)</i>	45
HERBAL TEAS	46
<i>Green Tea</i>	47
<i>Ginger Tea</i>	47
<i>Chamomile Tea</i>	48
<i>Lavender Tea</i>	48
<i>Lemon Balm Tea</i>	48
<i>Linden Tea</i>	48
<i>Oatstraw Tea</i>	48
<i>Skullcap (Scullcap) Tea</i>	49
<i>Motherwort Tea</i>	49
<i>Kava Kava Espresso</i>	49
<i>Mellow Mood Tea</i>	49
<i>St John's Wort</i>	50
<i>An Uplifting Tea Recipe</i>	50
<i>Traditional Indian Spiced Tea (Chai)</i>	50
<i>Ayurvedic Tea</i>	50
NUTRITION AND YOUR DIET	51

Dealing With Anxiety Naturally!!

<i>What Not to Eat</i>	51
<i>What to Eat</i>	52
VITAMINS NATURALLY	53
AYURVEDA.....	54
AROMATHERAPY	56
ACUPUNCTURE	59
TAI CHI - QI GONG	59
MEDITATION.....	60
YOGA	62
GEMSTONE THERAPY	64
REIKI	66
RELAXATION TAPES	66
HOBBIES.....	67
<i>Gardening</i>	68
<i>Exercise</i>	69
<i>Art</i>	69
<i>Music</i>	69
<i>Dance</i>	70
<i>Handicrafts</i>	70
BACH FLOWER REMEDIES	71
EMOTIONAL FREEDOM TECHNIQUES (EFT)	72
PSYCHOTHERAPY	73
CHOOSING A THERAPIST - WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW	75
BEHAVIORAL THERAPY	76
COGNITIVE THERAPY.....	76
COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY	77
PSYCHOANALYTIC THERAPY	78
HYPNOSIS.....	78
HELP AND SUPPORT	79
HELP LINES AND FORUMS.....	80

Introduction

'You can't breathe, your heart's pounding and you feel faint. Terror holds you firmly in its grip and you know there's nothing you can do about it.'

What I just described is only a little bit of what I went through when I suffered from Panic Disorder. Through numerous trials and errors I learned first how to cope with it and later how to prevent it. The first and most important step on the path to recovery is to face the fact that you do have a problem.

One of the very first things you'll need to do is to understand exactly what you're suffering from and how it works. If you don't fully understand the underlying causes and symptoms it becomes that much harder for you to find a remedy that works for you.

Remember that everyone is different and no two people are alike. Therefore, you can't expect that what works for someone else will necessarily work for you. Similarly you can't expect your anxiety triggers to be the same as someone else's. Sure they might seem alike on the surface of things but there'll be differences and it's these differences that set you apart. I'm not promising you an easy ride or an absolute guarantee that whatever method you try will work. What I will do however, is to help you find your way through the maze of information that's out there and to pepper it with insights from my own experiences.

There is one, very important thing to always bear in mind while you read this book – I'm not a doctor, nor am I a qualified medical practitioner in any field. What I've laid down in this book are suggestions and advice based on my own experiences. Please always consult a qualified medical practitioner prior to following any advice of this type; regardless of the source. Additionally, I'm not suggesting you stop your medication altogether and I'm not suggesting that you try any of the alternative methods I've explained in the book. My aim is only to help you through troubled times with a source of information that I found hard to come by when I needed it the most.

So with that brief explanation behind us let's proceed further down this road and perhaps find a cure that's right for you.

Overview

A staggering 20 million people in America alone are estimated as suffering from anxiety and panic disorders. Coupled with the stress inducing lifestyles of today, there's a good chance that most people who suffer from anxiety and panic disorders might also be suffering from other medical conditions as well.

For a person who suffers from either anxiety or panic (or both) the last thing they'll need on their plates is to have someone telling them there's nothing wrong with them, and that it's "all in their heads". These people are right to a certain extent in that medically at least anxiety disorders have been classed as Mental Disorders as opposed to Medical Disorders.

What they're mistaken about however, is the fact that you can turn off a switch somewhere in your brain at will and magically stop the attacks. It can be done to a certain extent, but it takes time and much effort before you can accomplish this - so don't despair.

It has been widely accepted, and doctors agree that anxiety disorders and panic attacks are a serious and sometimes debilitating condition for the sufferer. So the next time someone tells you to pull yourself together when you're having an attack you have no need to feel ashamed of yourself. You're not the only person who suffers from anxiety attacks and you're not alone, there are qualified medical practitioners who can help you.

By reading this book you've already taken one step in admitting your problem and finding a cure for yourself. Even in the toughest of times when you're suffering badly and you think you're alone in this world remember that you took this giant step by reading this book, and that you did it all by yourself. It doesn't matter if someone else bought or recommended the book, what matters here is that you have the courage to read on. No one is forcing you to read it, you're doing it on your own and in my opinion that's worth at least one shining star to place next to your name.

Remember,

Hold on and be strong, things will get better
– You just need a positive frame of mind.

The Difference between Anxiety and Panic

Before I start in earnest I'd first like to outline exactly what is meant when you say that you're having an anxiety attack as opposed to what you mean when you say you're having a panic attack.

Unfortunately the line isn't as clear cut as it could be and many people use both terms interchangeably signifying one to mean the other. To hopefully clarify things a little better for you I've tried to mention exactly what could be meant when a person is talking about a "panic attack" or an "anxiety attack" in a normal context outside of this book.

From my experience, in a normal situation when someone refers or uses the term "anxiety attack" they're probably trying to convey one of the following meanings:

- The simplest being anxiety attack = panic attack. So essentially one and the same
- They could also be referring to a period of intense anxiety where you suffer from heightened emotions without the accompanying feelings of panic
- Or if they don't suffer from intense and chronic anxiety this could relate to a time when they have feelings of slightly heightened anxiety
- They could even be referring to a lessened panic attack that isn't as intense as your usual ones

Panic disorder on the other hand (this is where you suffer recurrently from panic attacks¹), comes under the vast umbrella that is known as Anxiety Disorders as classified by the National Institute of Mental Health, or NIMH. I've discussed these disorders and their symptoms in detail in the section "Which Category Do you Fall into?"

For the sake of this book I've used the two – anxiety and panic – interchangeably so as to save on confusion. So when I refer to "anxiety" within this book you can take it to encompass both anxiety attacks and panic attacks.

You, Anxiety and Panic

Suddenly you can feel your heart start to pound. Blood rushes to your face and recedes again leaving you feeling dizzy and lightheaded, you're struggling for every breath and you find you're rooted to the spot. You know what you're going through isn't normal but you can't stop yourself.

¹ I've given an explanation of both Panic Attacks and Panic Disorder in the section entitled "Which Category do you fall into?"

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Sound familiar? This is what most Panic Attack victims suffer from. Everyone's personal trigger is different but the general symptoms are the same, although the ones I've mentioned above are by no means the only symptoms that a Panic Attack victim might feel. As the list is somewhat long, and in some instances case-specific I won't go into them right now. If you want to skip ahead however, you'll find that I've listed the symptoms alongside each particular type of Anxiety or Panic Disorder I've described.

Generally speaking, if you've suffered even once from either anxiety or panic attacks you'll be dreading the feelings of overall general helplessness that you get. Once triggered there's a good chance that you'll go out of your way to avoid the same situation from occurring again. Although this is a very natural response it can become very unhealthy, especially if your life becomes curtailed to the point where you're handicapped by your debilitating fears.

Put It All In Perspective

I realize that it's hard to overcome your fears especially if the emotions you feel are overwhelming, but it always helps to put things in perspective, and that's what a good friend of mine did for me. It was difficult and some of the things she said I already knew for myself, I just wasn't able to control my attacks. You probably won't be able to either, at least not immediately, but every little helps so I've jotted down some of the finer points I found to be of help to me and which might be of help to you as well.

- Feeling any kind of anxiety or panic is normal, it's your mind's natural instincts taking over, the "fight or flight" instinct as it's known. It's nothing to be ashamed of, after all this instinct got the human race where it is today
- Most people will feel anxiety over something or other at some stage of their lives, one of the best examples being an impending exam or perhaps even a first date. Your palms might become sweaty and your heart will race, you'll feel butterflies dancing around in your stomach. These are all natural reactions to an out-of-the-ordinary stress filled situation
- Not as common as anxiety, panic is nevertheless a regular occurrence in a lot of people's lives. Trauma or even a childhood fear can bring on a panic attack. Something as simple as being caught in the rain without an umbrella can cause panic in some people. All you need to do is remember that there's nothing unnatural about any of your feelings – they're all very natural reactions that you have
- At some point in time everyone becomes humiliated or embarrassed in public. It's nothing new and happens constantly, the only way to cope with it is to resolve the situation from within yourself. There's no way you can go back and change what happened

You'll probably be thumbing your nose at me right about now, and I can hear the tired sighs of "I've heard all of this before". My advice would be to just

read on and let what I'm saying sit in your subconscious for a while. Eventually you'll come to terms with who you are – a normal person with normal fears and worries.

What is Anxiety and Panic Disorder?

So what really is an anxiety or panic attack? Perhaps you don't suffer from it yourself, but you know someone who does and you want to better understand it. If so, the preceding section probably only made sense half of the time, and you still haven't got a clue as to what makes panic and anxiety tick.

Like many mentally harmful problems anxiety disorders aren't easy to explain. Putting it in simple terms might seem to be trivializing it whereas using big medical words just makes it all that much harder to understand. So hoping that you won't think I'm trivializing what can be a debilitating condition to most sufferers, myself included, I'll try and put it in an easy to understand manner.

If you got the gist of what I was saying earlier, both anxiety and panic are natural reactions that everybody feels from time to time. The trigger for either feeling can be different for each person although a few situations exist that are universally thought of as panic inducing and stress filled.

Another good example of such a situation that I can give you would be along the lines of public speaking. Not many of us can successfully walk up onto a stage without feeling at least some form of anxiety. This is normal and we can generally fudge our way through it managing to overcome our feelings.

What happens with the debilitating kind of anxiety attack is that you freeze up and are completely unable to cope with the situation. Time might seem to go slower and you might be feeling removed from your feelings, seeing things from the outside as it were. You might go through a number of different stages of panic, from a racing heartbeat to sweaty palms to cold shivers running up and down your back. The only constant factor is your intense feelings of helplessness.

For the person who hasn't suffered from a panic attack all of this might seem slightly ridiculous but let me assure you that it's not. What I just described was very real and something that I went through before I was able to find a way to cope with the constant anxiety and panic attacks by myself. The hardest part that I remember from that day was the aftermath. Not only did I freeze up on the podium unable to deliver my speech, but I also had to deal with the humiliation that accompanied the whole debacle. The added attention of people being kind and asking me if I needed anything, the covert looks that I received from yet other people were all bad. However, perhaps worst of all for me were the pitying looks accompanied by a slightly strained I-don't-know-what-to-say kind of look from the people who were milling about in confusion around me.

I have since then managed to walk up onto a stage and give a short address, but this was only possible through intense hard work on my part. So when I

say that you can do it, you can conquer your Anxiety and Panic Attacks - I'm speaking from experience.

Hopefully I've managed to convey what I feel in a manner conducive to ease of understanding, and you're now comfortable with moving on to the next chapter to find out how you can first cope with your anxiety before moving on to finding a suitable cure.

What Can You Do About It?

There are many things you can do to cope with or prevent your anxiety attacks. For myself, I found that the best way to start your journey is to first understand what you're up against. If you recognize and acknowledge your symptoms as pertaining to such and such a reason you're better equipped to handle yourself, if and when another attack occurs.

Step 1: Recognize that you are having anxiety or panic attacks.

Step 2: Identify what triggered or triggers your attacks.

Step 3: Obtain an accurate diagnosis from a doctor or a qualified professional, or identify for yourself what type of Anxiety or Panic Disorder you suffer from.

Step 4: Share your feelings with someone you trust to help you such as a friend or a family member.

Step 5: Follow a few simple procedures to help you cope with an attack.

Step 6: Get treatment for yourself, either through Natural Remedies or through Medication – your doctor should be able to help you.

Any or all of these steps can help you to fight your anxiety attacks, and help you to get on with the business of living. Admittedly it's not as simple or clear cut as it sounds – there's a good chance that you'll have to go through a lot of emotional upheaval before you can finally reach your goal. My philosophy though is that if you want something badly enough you'll always reach for the sky and I'll go into a little more detail on all of these steps in the following chapters.

Let me just reiterate again here that I'm not a doctor or qualified medical practitioner. The essence of what I've just mentioned is a list of logical steps that I found worked for me. If you do believe yourself to have either Anxiety or Panic Disorder, please see a doctor as soon as possible. There's no substitute for an accurate medical diagnosis.

How to cope with an attack

Until such time as you feel yourself able to confide in someone or to seek medical advice, there are a few things that you can do to cope with an attack. Remember though that these are only stop gap methods and shouldn't be taken as a substitute for proper medical treatments.

Breathing Properly

One of the easiest things that you can do to help you cope is to learn how to breathe. That's right – Breathe. Forget the fact that you've been breathing perfectly fine since the day you were born. There are precious few things that every living being has in common and there are even less things that almost every single human being does wrong and this is breathing properly the way we were meant to. Only a very few people can actually breathe properly, the rest of us are just playing at it.

By learning the proper breathing techniques you hopefully bring an oasis of calm to your troubled world. However, trying out your newfound knowledge of breathing whilst in the midst of a raging panic attack probably isn't going to work wonders for you. You might instead contribute to worsening your attacks by hyperventilating without even realizing it.

Breathing properly ensures that a steady stream of oxygen is inhaled and carbon dioxide is exhaled from your blood. By hyperventilating you cause an excess of Carbon Dioxide in your blood leading to such symptoms as dizziness, lightheadedness, headaches, numbness and tingling feelings in your lips, hands and feet. By contrast if your fast breathing is due to exercise or similar exertion then you're not hyperventilating but trying to regulate the gasses within your blood stream to more regular levels. Rapid breathing in this case helps rather than hinders you. So be wary when trying this breathing exercise for the first time and make sure you're not going to hyperventilate.

First and foremost, practice your breathing techniques during your much valued anxiety-free hours. The more you practice the more you'll be able to control your breathing and hopefully bring it into play at the crucial moment.

- The learning process is quite simple and shouldn't take you too long to learn. To begin with, sit in a comfortable chair with your back straight (slouching does you no favors), or if you like you can even lie down or stand upright. Choose whichever position is most comfortable for you
- Next place a hand on your stomach and concentrate for a second on your regular breathing. Does your chest or your stomach rise with each breath? Ideally it should be your stomach that rises. If it's not your stomach but your chest which rises, first practice breathing a little so your stomach rises and not your chest
- Keeping your hand on your stomach for the moment, take in a deep breath through your nostrils for a rough count of 5 seconds. Your stomach should rise with the breath, so concentrate on filling your stomach with air. If you're doing this properly your hand – which is still on your stomach – should rise along with your breathing

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- Hold the breath for another count of five, or less if you're unable to hold it for that long
- Now exhale slowly, letting the breath out through your mouth, again to a steady count of five and this time you should feel your stomach go down with the breath

If at any time you're doing this exercise, you feel the onset of panic or anxiety creeping in stop immediately. Remember, Rome wasn't built in a day and neither should you try to conquer your fears in a day either. Take your time building up your stamina and you'll get there eventually.

Concentrate first on practicing your breathing in short bouts only increasing the length of time when you feel comfortable doing so. Your goal should be to breathe properly without your knowledge. In other words it should come as naturally to you as well – breathing!

On a little side note, I don't know if you remember but as a child you were probably given a small brown paper bag to hold over your mouth and told to breathe into it if you were prone to hyperventilating or panic attacks.

One of the most vivid memories I have when I was in Kindergarten is of my best friend having difficulty in breathing. The teacher handed her a brown paper bag and told her quite calmly to breathe into it, all the while keeping eye contact with her. I never thought when I saw this that I would one day be on the other side of that brown paper bag breathing for all I was worth.

These days however the practice of using a brown paper bag has been discontinued since medical research has shown it to cause the Carbon Dioxide levels in your blood to rise too rapidly. Although I don't use a brown paper bag, what I am doing now is essentially the same breathing technique and one that I use quite successfully.

There are many different breathing techniques that you can use although I've only mentioned a simple one that's easy to learn on your own. If this works for you and you're interested in continuing there are many resources available for you to utilize. I've mentioned these variously within the section "Curing Your Anxiety and Panic Disorder".

Relaxation

Although you would be forgiven for thinking that breathing was a relaxation technique, strictly speaking it's not so much that as it is a way of life. So what do you do to relax?

Again, it's best if you practice these techniques beforehand so as not to be caught short when you really need it in the middle of an attack.

- If you're able to and can take the time, a nice leisurely stroll on a clear sunny day in a calming woodsy area can actually help to relieve your stress.

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- If you're at work and can't leave your desk but feel the onset of an attack, just stop your work for a second and sit back in your chair. If you can, practice your breathing exercises but other than that just let your body relax back into your chair and let your emotions flow over you recognizing them for what they are. Eventually your attack will pass and you can go back to being your normal self again. If you feel unable to do this in plain view of anyone else you can go outside or find a place where you won't be disturbed.
- Distract yourself by sucking on a toffee or sipping some water. The very action needed to do this can relax your thoughts, distracting you from your incipient attack.

The best thing that you can do to relax both your mind and body however is meditation, and the breathing techniques described in the earlier section is a form of it. I've covered meditation in the section focusing on prevention and cures under the heading "Meditation".

Phone a Friend

As an alternative you can also phone a friend. This is another great way to get your mind off your anxiety or panic and really very simple. Compile a list of friends and family whom you can call in an emergency and who are also supportive of your condition.

The simple act of just talking to someone can calm you down considerably and bring the world back into focus. It might also help if you stayed away from the topic of your anxiety or panic attack for the moment, just letting yourself calm down naturally. If you feel the need to talk about whatever caused your attack in the first place however, do so as it will be immensely cathartic for you.

Keep this list on hand and easily accessible so you don't need to root through a whole lot of junk to find it. (And if you have a cordless phone and you're forever misplacing it you might want to think about investing in a phone with a cord as well!)

Reasons for Anxiety and Panic Attacks

If you want to understand why you get anxiety or panic attacks the best place to start is with the reasons. If you can begin to understand the underlying reasons for your condition then perhaps you'll be able to get a better handle on your situation thereby helping you to find a reasonable cure or prevention for yourself.

There can be many reasons that explain your anxiety and panic attacks, but I've only listed three of what I see to be the major contributory causes. There are a lot more different reasons than I'm able to go into here, and I do apologize if you feel I've overlooked anything. Also it seemed to me that most anxiety or panic triggers or causes seem to have their roots in at least one of the three that I've listed below.

Traumatic Event

If you are predisposed towards having anxiety or panic attacks there's a good chance that you suffered from a traumatic event in your life either recently or as long ago as when you were in diapers. No, I'm not joking. Your mind will have recorded and filed away any event of significance even though you don't remember too much from your toddler years.

Older Traumatic Event

If it's the latter case – you suffered from some unknown trauma when you were young – then you probably didn't or still don't remember the root cause. The only reason you're suffering from these panic attacks could be exposure to a situation similar to the one you were in earlier or perhaps you saw something that triggered those memories for just a second. Or perhaps you smelled something, heard something, or touched something. The reasons for triggering an attack related to such childhood events can be numerous and if you want to find them out for yourself there are viable options that you can take. Psychiatrists, counselors, hypnosis under supervision, or even something as simple as asking your parents or someone you knew in your childhood whether you had undergone any traumatic event that you're unaware of now.

Personally speaking I didn't have to dig too far to find the cause of my fear of spiders, my parents told me readily enough and really in the ending my cousin just couldn't plead ignorance. You see where this is leading right? I was young so I probably built this up out of proportion but at the time it seemed to me like the spider crawling up my arm (my cousin had placed it on my dress) was at least as big as a beach ball! What can I say, I was young and although I'm not scared of them any more I can't say that I completely adore spiders either.

Recent Traumatic Events

If the trauma that triggered your first attack was more recent, perhaps a car accident or the death of a loved one, then you probably remember what the cause was as well as what the trigger was for your initial panic attack.

Initially sometimes you might not even notice any panic symptoms. For example if your trauma was that of a car accident in heavy torrential rains on winding cliff roads with the sea pounding below a sheer cliff face while someone else was driving, you could merely experience any or all the following feelings of anxiety without giving way to a full blown panic attack.

You might feel anxious if,

- Someone other than you drives the car
- You have to drive the car
- You have to physically get in or sit for any length of time in a car
- You have to drive near a cliff
- You're on winding roads
- You hear the sound of crashing waves
- You're caught out in the middle of a rain storm
- Or any or all of the above

These are all natural reactions and you might treat them as such in the beginning if all you feel is a heightened sense of nervousness or anxiety and it's only later (perhaps a few months or years later) that all these emotions and suppressed feelings come crashing down on you. That's all you were doing really in the beginning after you suffered from such an emotional impact – suppressing your feelings in lieu of ones that would keep you from experiencing the same intense emotions that you went through during the actual trauma.

This kind of anxiety can in time manifest itself into a variety of things but most of the time I believe it has been termed as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). You might also be under the illusion that you need to have fought in a war or seen battle to experience PTSD but it's not the case. Anyone who's experienced trauma of any kind and suffers from symptoms only later is predisposed to having PTSD. However I won't go in to much detail on that here as I've covered it in the section marked "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder".

If you have suffered from a recent traumatic or emotional upheaval and you're also prone to excessive worry or anxiety you should be aware that you could suffer from either an anxiety or panic attack. If you do feel yourself succumbing and especially if this is your first time in experiencing such an attack it's best to seek help immediately, or talk it out with someone close to you. Although you might not realize it talking your problems through is very good therapeutically for you.

On the other hand if you've suffered from a traumatic event in your lifetime recent or otherwise don't worry too much about thinking that you might get a

panic attack. Most times you can live your whole life without experiencing one no matter how much you go through. You'll just have other more natural outlets for your worries without your even realizing it. Besides, too much worry is bad for the soul and might even bring about a panic attack where otherwise you might have had none!

Is it Hereditary?

If you suffer from anxiety or panic attacks and someone related to you does as well there'll always be that burning unanswered question in the back of your mind – “Are panic and anxiety disorders hereditary?”

Unfortunately my answer can't be as clear cut as I would like it to be since scientific opinion is currently divided and the answer can go both ways depending on what you read and from whom it comes.

For a lot of people there's reason to believe that anxiety disorders are hereditary with some manifestations stretching back a few generations into the family tree. For example it might have been known that your great grandmother suffered and your grandmother, your mother and now you and your siblings. This is not unusual and it's not all that uncommon to find that these disorders can appear in families and throughout generations. This is one of the leading reasons scientists are exploring this line of thought and trying to match genetics with anxiety disorders. And though they have found many factors that point soundly in that direction they have yet not uncovered anything conclusive.

On a side note, although my example was a sound one I wouldn't want you to believe that anxiety disorders only manifests itself in women or the female members of your family. On the contrary men and women both have an equal chance of getting an anxiety or panic attack, although for some forms of the disorders women are more susceptible than men.

If you want to know whether you will pass it on to your children I'm afraid the answer is still a blank. However it doesn't necessarily follow that just because you or another family member suffers from it that your children will also suffer from it. There are many people out there who suffer from either one or both of these disorders but whose children live perfectly normal lives. If you are concerned though, the best thing that you can do will be to go and speak with your doctor or a counselor who will help you. In my case although I suffer from anxiety and (now) occasional panic attacks all of my family members are the most prosaic and down-to-earth people that I've ever met.

Which Category do you fall into?

So you suffer from anxiety and panic attacks but you don't know what type. Forget that, you didn't even know there were different types of panic and anxiety disorders. If at all you felt that they should go into the categories "Mild", "Reasonably Mild", "Severe", and my personal favorite "Full blown panic attack". I'm not poking fun at anyone this is simply how I labeled my panic attacks and my anxiety. I've learned much since those days and even though I still tend to label them the same way I now have a disorder type on which to append it to.

To begin with to help you define what type you fall into, we'll start with a brief overview of the various types of anxiety disorders. After which, I'll go a little bit in depth into each one before moving on to the part that you really want read about – Cures.

- Panic Attack
- Panic Disorder
- Agoraphobia
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder
- Specific Phobia
- Social Anxiety
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
- Children and Anxiety
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Panic Attack

You're in the middle of the supermarket and you're suddenly overcome by a wave of lightheadedness. You grip the shopping cart firmly in your hands. Suddenly your heart starts to pound and you have trouble breathing. The grocery aisles around you take on a surreal quality and you start to panic as terror takes hold of you. You want to cry out and call for help but you just can't do it so you curl yourself up into a little ball and huddle shivering against the shelves hoping and praying that whatever's happening to you will pass.

This is by no means the lightest or strongest panic attack that anyone can suffer but it is an example of what can happen to you. This was my first experience of a panic attack and something that I'm not likely to forget. (The stage fright incident came a few years later). The pain and the fear that I might be losing my mind was my constant companion for the next few weeks along with an unhealthy fear that it might reoccur.

Of course, at this stage I didn't even know what a panic attack was and didn't know that I could find treatment for myself. All I knew was that after that pivotal day in the supermarket I could barely force myself to function and I know I didn't set foot inside that supermarket again for a good many years.

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Reading this you might be led to believe that I was overreacting and in a sense I probably was but not of my own volition. There was literally nothing I could do at that time to control my fear of being swamped with such mind numbing terror again.

A panic attack can strike anyone anywhere and without warning as was my case. If you're wondering whether you've ever suffered from a panic attack before then the answer is most likely, no. Unless you've blocked out the events from your mind there's no way that you can easily forget the debilitating fear and panic that grips you in its vise-like jaws. And for the person who suffers from one panic attack there's always the fear that you will succumb again and that stays with us for a long time if not our whole lives.

Recurring Panic Attacks are referred to as a Panic Disorder and I've covered this in the next section. This is also unfortunately what my lone panic attack in the supermarket turned into after some time.

Below I've listed some of the symptoms you might experience during a Panic Attack.

Symptoms

- Dizziness
- Lightheadedness
- Chest pains
- Shortness of breath
- Fast beating or pounding heart
- A sense of unreality of the world around you
- A fear that you might be losing your mind
- A fear that you might be dying
- Nausea
- Excessive sweating
- Stomach problems
- Shivers or chills
- A feeling of being smothered
- Mind numbing fear or terror
- Shaking / Trembling

Panic Disorder

The symptoms are the same as for a Panic Attack and the underlying causes are the same, so what makes Panic Disorder different from a Panic Attack? Not much really, only that while you may suffer only once or twice from a Panic Attack, with Panic Disorder you suffer constantly and on a regular basis.

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With Panic Disorder you will feel all the symptoms of a Panic Attack and more, as anxiety and worry creep into the mix as you tend to keep looking over your shoulder to see when the next attack will hit you. This in turn builds up a vicious cycle where your anxiety over another panic attack may actually be the cause of it. Sometimes your symptoms can even be so severe that you might be led to think that you're either dying or losing your mind.

This is a completely legitimate fear for those who suffer from constant panic attacks and something that needs to be addressed if you're being treated. And in such extreme cases where you fear incurring another panic attack you can be driven to extremes causing you to shun anyone and anything associated with your panic attacks.

For a lot of people this will further manifest itself as a form of agoraphobia, where the worst case scenario is that you become house bound for a significant portion of your life. And if you're unable to find your way back through the emotional fog you might even find yourself stranded there for the foreseeable future. As with panic attacks panic disorder can be triggered by anything from the simple actions of lighting a match to pulling your car out of your driveway.

Note: Panic disorder is a very serious condition and shouldn't be taken lightly. Treatment should be sought from a qualified medical practitioner as soon as possible to stop a rapid spiraling effect that can lead to further complications some of which can become extremely debilitating.

Symptoms

The basic symptoms for Panic Disorder are the same as for a Panic Attack, but include a few extra symptoms as well. To make it easier for you to read I've placed these new symptoms on top followed immediately by the Panic Attack symptoms that I listed earlier in the "Panic Attack" section.

- Intense anxiety over incurring another attack
- Lingering worry
- Depression
- A restriction of lifestyle as you seek to avoid an attack
- Dizziness
- Lightheadedness
- Chest pains
- Shortness of breath
- Fast beating or pounding heart
- A sense of unreality of the world around you
- A fear that you might be losing your mind
- A fear that you might be dying
- Nausea
- Excessive sweating

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- Stomach problems
- Shivers or chills
- A feeling of being smothered
- Mind numbing fear or terror
- Shaking / Trembling

Agoraphobia

Avoidance of heights, crowds and other such activities is the prime goal of the agoraphobic, and as I mentioned in the earlier section “Panic Disorders”, in extreme cases the severe agoraphobic can become housebound for a long period.

This is done through a desire to escape from the things that are most likely to cause a Panic attack, and if not treated can cripple your life considerably. It is I believe interesting to note that the word agoraphobia itself comes from the Greek “agora” meaning market or crowded open places. So an agoraphobic will generally seek to avoid such places. Thus the desire to hide yourself away from the open world and teeming masses of people.

This is naturally a very unhealthy outlook and should not be allowed to continue for too long. The person who suffers from Agoraphobia needs the constant support of friends and family to help them through this crippling period in their lives.

Generally agoraphobia stems from panic attacks and panic disorders. Agoraphobia manifests itself in a manner that is conducive to your avoiding specific situations or circumstances that you will have difficulty in coping with or which will leave you with feelings of intense embarrassment.

Agoraphobia can be treated successfully although prevention is always better than cure so early treatment of either panic disorders or anxiety disorders will help stop agoraphobia in its tracks.

However since this can't always be the case treatments can encompass a range of options from taking prescription drugs to hypnosis to therapeutic treatments such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. I will be discussing all of these in the later section entitled “Curing Your Anxiety and Panic Disorders”.

Symptoms

Symptoms for Agoraphobia include but are not limited to;

- Fear of crowds
- Fear of open places
- Fear of heights
- Anxiety over being in difficult places or situations
- Anxiety of being unable to find help in an emergency
- Incurring a Panic Attack

Symptoms also tend to include those which I mentioned in the Panic Disorders section as well.

Generalized Anxiety Disorder

Many people don't realize it but they might be suffering from GAD or Generalized Anxiety Disorder, as it's known.

In the normal course of events you tend to worry over many things, and some of these might be big and some not so big, but you still worry regardless and wait anxiously until an outcome is reached. This is fine and it's considered natural.

People with GAD however are prone to be chronic worriers and will worry needlessly and endlessly over the smallest thing and will generally continue to do so for a longer period than necessary. They will spend many sleepless nights and many hours in their preoccupied state of mind often being reduced to states of nail biting anxiety.

Although worry is natural the excessive worry that GAD sufferers are subject to is unnatural and in the long run unhealthy. This unhealthy behavior doesn't only affect you but will also encompass your whole family. Even the most loving of people will find it difficult to cope with the constant tension and anxiety that the chronic worrier goes through on a daily basis.

All too often the partner or spouse of the GAD sufferer will find it too difficult to cope and become overwhelmed themselves leading to a possible breakup in relations. This could happen because a number of factors come into play but mostly because the other person can't fully understand your incessant worrying over what they consider to be inconsequential little details.

The reasons for worry don't need to be huge, they can be everyday little things like waiting endlessly for your family to come back home safely from wherever they've been, wondering what fresh new disaster tomorrow's going to bring, or any such situation that can cause you worry. It can encompass a variety of things like your health, money, family, weather etc.

Most of the time GAD sufferers will have little or no control over any of these situations thereby ensuring that their worries will persist almost endlessly.

If you suffer from GAD or you know someone who does then you probably know that the chronic worrying is unnatural. The GAD sufferer however will be unable to control themselves thereby causing them further distress. You might also suffer from erratic mood swings and have insomnia because of your inability to control yourself. You might even be subjected to depression and all its accompanying side effects as well.

If you suffer from Generalized Anxiety Disorder you need to seek treatment as soon as possible to stop your condition from deteriorating further.

Symptoms

Symptoms that you might experience for Generalized Anxiety Disorder include,

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- Inability to shake off persistent and nagging worry
- Chronic worrying
- Insomnia
- Fear over a situation they can't control
- Intense anxiety
- Panic attacks
- Inability to relax
- Physical symptoms such as trembling or twitching
- Headaches
- Irritability
- Mood swings
- Diarrhea
- Nausea
- Lightheadedness
- Shortness of breath
- Constant tension
- Depression
- Trouble concentrating
- Tendency to feel tired

Specific Phobia

You're late for an important meeting and rush into the building bypassing the bank of elevators just in front of you. Without conscious thought or decision on your part you head straight for the stairwell and trudge your way up to the eleventh floor.

If this sounds like something you would do then there's a good chance you're suffering from Specific Phobia.

In this example your specific phobia would be that you're afraid of elevators. They're tiny enclosed spaces with little to no room and only held by a couple of tension wires with gravity working full time against it. Did I forget to mention the tiny enclosed space?

It's irrational and you know it but you would take a trip down to the Devil's hideout before you would ride on those elevators. Plenty of people take those elevators daily but you still wouldn't trust yourself to them.

Why is it then? What makes you stand out from the crowd and take the stairs even if it means walking all the way up to the top floor? Fear, that's what. And the feeling of helplessness that accompanies it along with the knowledge that you're unable to do anything in a given situation. The irrational knowledge

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that tells you that an elevator is an anomaly with closed in spaces held up against gravity by two small strings (tension wires but to you they become strings).

Specific Phobia can encompass just about anything and ranges from a very common fear of heights to a fear of blood. Claustrophobia is a good example of a Specific Phobia and one which many people suffer from.

With a Specific Phobia it's very easy to let it hold sway in your life and still lead a normal life. Sure you avoid the elevators but that's because you need the exercise right? You like flowers you really do, but somehow or other they always come into contact with your shearing scissors.

For the most part it won't matter too much if you go out of your way to avoid the things that you're scared of, after all it's pretty understandable, people go out of their way to avoid things all the time right? But what you need to ask yourself is whether they go through the same nerve racking tension and anxiety that you do when you come face to face with your phobia? Do they go to extreme lengths to avoid such situations?

That's one of the unseen pitfalls of suffering from Specific Phobia – you'll let it take over your life without even realizing it.

Symptoms

- Specific Phobia sufferers might experience the following symptoms,
- Intense irrational fear of a situation
- Intense irrational fear of a certain objects
- Extreme fear
- Panic attacks
- The inability to function properly when confronted with your fear
- Pounding heart
- Shortness of breath
- Anxiety
- Extreme avoidance of such objects or situations
- Intense and emotional outbursts when confronted with these
- Distress
- And in some cases where avoidance is impossible – depression
- The recognition that your fear is excessive and unreasonable

Social Anxiety

On the scale of all Anxiety Disorders Social Anxiety is a fairly new entry into the scene and as such has been overlooked for quite a few years. People

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suffering from Social Anxiety were often mistaken for being shy and of a generally retiring disposition.

This is in fact not the case at all. If you are a naturally shy person you will hesitate to put yourself forward in almost any situation but you won't experience the sensations that accompany anxiety attacks.

On the other hand if you suffer from Social Anxiety it doesn't necessarily follow that you have to be shy and retiring. In fact you could be the life of the party and not feel a moment's discomfort from being the center of attention.

Your main fears will probably center around intense humiliation and being placed in embarrassing situations from which you're unable to extricate yourself. And since either an anxiety attack or a panic attack will only draw such unwanted attention to yourself, you might even be fueled by a desire to avoid such a situation and in extreme cases will cut yourself off from society entirely thereby taking you from Social Anxiety to Agoraphobia in an instant.

Social Anxiety like any of the other Anxiety disorders is curable, but is best if is caught in the early stages before it escalates out of hand.

Symptoms

Symptoms can include,

- Fear of a socially humiliating situation
- Fear of being embarrassed
- Feelings of incompetence
- Heightened feeling of self awareness
- Extreme anxiety
- Also can include Panic Attack symptoms

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

It's late at night you're home reading a book and the clock hits eleven o'clock. You yawn and stretch and for no apparent reason you get up and head for the kitchen. Here you proceed to check the stove top to make sure its cool and that you've turned it off. Next you head for the refrigerator to make sure you've placed all the dairy products on one shelf all the vegetable products on another shelf and all the meat products on the shelf below. If they're even an inch out of place you place them back into order and firmly close the refrigerator door. Then you move to the back door and make sure that each lock is firmly in place giving a good tug to each as you go along just to make doubly sure.

You now go back and do the same sequence of events all over again – another three times. You're not too fussed over this since you do this every night without fail and it's a normal part of your life, or at least that's what it looks like to an outsider. All the while you're carrying out your self appointed ritual you might actually be fretting over the fact that you know it's needless

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but you can't help yourself. You need to finish each ritual without stride or break in them otherwise dire things may happen to you.

This is a taste of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and something similar to what most OCD victims go through on a daily basis. The compulsion doesn't need to be as elaborate as what I just mentioned either. It could simply be a matter of counting squares and lines in the paving as you walk or applying soap to yourself twice while showering. You could even have an undeniable need to place your spoons and forks just so in a manner that only you're aware of or if someone else sets the table you might need to place everything again yourself, maybe even in the exact same order.

OCD can hit anytime and anywhere and is an anxiety disorder that leads you ultimately to live a very constrained life. If you don't get help for your condition then the rituals you go through daily just to do one small thing can take over your life to the point that you're left debilitated and panic stricken if you're unable to complete even a small portion of it.

Also you should probably be aware that just because you wonder about something like the iron being unplugged or the stove being switched off before you leave the house and might even go to check it repeatedly this is not necessarily a sign that you're suffering from Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. On the contrary it's a normal emotional response that you have to imminent danger and experience of things going wrong.

It's only when you take this a step or two further, and start creating elaborate detours or rituals to make sure that all is as should be, taking an extra half hour to leave the house into the bargain, that you should be thinking along the lines of OCD.

If you suffer from OCD you might be aware that the daily rituals you're performing aren't natural or even unhealthy but you might be wholly unable to help yourself or even to put a stop to it. You might even suffer from depression due to your inability to help yourself from performing these rituals.

With almost roughly 1 in 50 people suffering from OCD you can be assured that you're not alone in your sufferings. If you suffer from OCD to any degree there's no need to worry that it might reach the stages where you find yourself unable to cope with work or your life. The scenarios that I mentioned were extreme cases and with treatment your Obsessive Compulsive Disorder need never reach those proportions. There are treatments and various cures that can help you.

I go into more detail on your treatment options in the section entitled "Curing your Anxiety and Panic Disorders", but for now I will give you a rundown on some of the options open to you.

Amongst all the other medications that are available these days to treat anxiety related disorders Clomipramine and Fluoxetine are two drugs that are supposed to help people who suffer from Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. Sometimes either of these drugs alone or when combined with behavioral therapy can help you to overcome your fears and obsessions. There are more drugs on the market other than these two but I only mentioned these as they have been found to be widely effective for OCD patients. Talk to your doctor

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about these or any other prescription drugs that might help you curb your OCD.

Symptoms

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder has many symptoms and these are to a large extent dependant upon what exactly your Compulsive behavior encompasses. However I've listed a few symptoms that seem to be the same across the board,

- Obsessive behavior that impacts your life
- Anxious thoughts
- Fear and anxiety if you don't complete your rituals
- Unease if something that doesn't correspond to your compulsions occur
- Urgent need to fulfill your particular rituals for a given situation
- Feelings of doubt about a certain set of circumstances
- Going out of your way to avoid things that will disturb your compulsions (like crossing the street to avoid an odd paving stone)
- The crippling inability to continue with your daily life if you don't do something "just so"
- The need to have an organized world around you that won't suddenly change focus leaving you stranded
- Disturbing images or feelings that pass through your head, these can sometimes be violent or sexual in nature
- Depression

Children and Anxiety

You might take it lightly or even be completely unaware of it but children suffer from anxiety disorders as well. Some of these will wane naturally over the course of time or stay with the child into adulthood. Sometimes the symptoms can disappear entirely only to recur in the child later on in life. Any and all of these can happen and it's been found that approximately 43% of children between the ages of six and twelve are most likely to suffer from these disorders.

So how do you know when it's going to hit and whom it's going to hit? You don't and that's the crux of the matter. It's just as difficult to diagnose in children as it is in adults. More so actually since children are more likely to treat it as normal and just shrug it off without being aware of the implications. Many times where an adult would be aware that some types of behavior wasn't normal a child would continue on with their life blithely unaware that what they were doing was out of the ordinary.

Good examples of these would be Generalized Anxiety Disorder and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. If you take GAD the adult who worries excessively will always know at the back of their mind that it's unnecessary

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and unhealthy to continue with such worrying. Or even with OCD where you perform daily sometimes senseless rituals to do something. For either of these cases the child would be unaware of what he or she was doing wasn't normal. They simply don't have that experience of life to be able to differentiate.

The only real way you can tell is by noticing changes in your children that might be pointing to such symptoms. But don't just go and take them into your doctor simply because they display one sign or symptom which in most cases could just be normal behavior.

Talk with your child first show them love and compassion and above all trust. They need to be able to trust you with their fears and dreams before they can talk to you. Your child suffers from the same doubts and insecurities that every human being goes through and it doesn't change merely because they're "little" people.

Often, if the cases are mild then there's a good likelihood that all symptoms will disappear with time, a little patience and a lot of love. There may be cases however when the emotional upheaval or trauma of a situation is too great for those small shoulders to bear in which case care should be taken that they're not overlooked in the needs of adults.

Although you can't be completely certain that anxiety disorders aren't hereditary, there's no hard evidence to prove the contrary either. So if anxiety disorders tend to crop up in your family you might want to be aware that there can be a chance for your child to suffer from an anxiety disorder. Conversely even though rampant anxiety might run through your family tree your child might not be subject to any of the debilitating symptoms and could live out their life happy and carefree. Remember that there are always two sides to a coin when you're looking to see whether your child suffers from anxiety attacks or not.

Medication wise if you're looking to cure your child you need to be careful as most of the prescription drugs can become habit forming. The same applies with any of the herbal treatments I've mentioned in this book, which although not habit forming haven't necessarily been proven to be good for children either. So when giving medication or using any treatment on your child always make sure that no harm will ensue from its usage prolonged or otherwise. Always consult your doctor or pediatrician on what's best for your child it doesn't help to take matters into your hands. Children are vulnerable they can't help themselves most of the time so make sure that your child isn't placed in a situation that will cause them more harm.

Children can also suffer from simple phobias but these generally go away with age. I remember that I used to be scared of dogs and I don't know when my fears went away but I love dogs now and am even looking into getting one as a pet! These are all natural responses and reactions that children go through and often, time itself will sort it out. They could occur for a myriad of reasons ranging from the fact that their best friend is scared of it so they are too, to the fact that they snuck a peak at a movie they shouldn't have while you weren't looking.

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If you're worried about this behavior though talk about it with your child first before going to see a physician. I can't stress enough the importance of keeping lines of communication open with your children. Most of the time prevention really is better than a cure.

Like I mentioned earlier on, children suffer from the same anxieties and fears that adults do but sometimes as in the cases I've listed below children will suffer from an anxiety disorder that adults don't.

- Separation Anxiety Disorder
- Selective Mutism

Separation Anxiety Disorder

Simply stated the child fears separation from either a parent or a guardian or a grandparent, basically the one person who has stayed constant in their lives almost from day one. This can be especially crippling when the child knows that there's nothing they can do to stop the enforced separation.

Good examples are when the parents are separating or leaving for a short length of time. In the case of divorce or separation the child is not only beset by doubts and fears of losing a parent but also by the need to choose between one parent or the other. Even if they don't have to choose between parents it can become hard on them when they're separated from the other parent.

What about if the parent is leaving for a short time due to business matters? What then? Nothing changes for the child really in that they may still feel intense anxiety over the parent's whereabouts. If your child has seen news clippings or heard gruesome stories on the playground (all children live for these even if they don't fully understand them) they might become worried or anxious that the parent won't be coming back.

Another example is if there is a sudden death of a loved one not necessarily the parent, perhaps an adored grandmother or grandfather. A favorite uncle or aunt or even a friend's mother or father passing away can bring about Separation Anxiety within your child. They might understand intuitively or on a very basic level that the person is no longer coming back and they will never see them again. This is a natural response and can be attributed to traumatic events as well, such as car accidents, or if a parent becomes persistently ill.

Any, or all of these examples can manifest itself in your child's mind as fears and can cause irrational anxiety, worry and can sometimes manifest itself as bad dreams.

Selective Mutism

Earlier termed as Elective Mutism, this disorder was changed to Selective Mutism since it was later found that children displaying this condition were most times unable to control themselves. In effect this was a natural cut-off valve as it were to help the child cope with extreme anxiety and tension.

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Selective Mutism can occur for many reasons and depends to a large part on what the child has been going through. So if the child suffered from a recent trauma their only way of dealing with this might be to become selectively “mute” or in other words persistently fail to speak.

For most children this is only a temporary stage and will pass with time and or proper treatment such as therapy. Sometimes all you’ll need to do is to let your child relax back into their former carefree existence to bring them out of their shell. Naturally this won’t work with most children especially where their anxiety is caused by the disruption in their family lives due to the separation of their parents.

In this case other methods will need to be employed as sometimes even therapy won’t work if the child sees it as another source of anxiety. There is no known cure as such for Selective Mutism although therapy as I mentioned before, or prescription drugs might be able to help.

Symptoms of Anxiety in Children

Generally speaking the symptoms children suffer from for any type of Anxiety or Panic Disorder are basically the same as you would find for any adult who suffered from these disorders.

Treatment for these are also alike but tailored to suit the young mind and may not include as many drugs. More and more though parents are turning away from the prescription drug route and turning instead to finding natural cures and remedies that will help their child.

There are little signs that you can look for if you think your child might be suffering anxiety or panic attacks.

- Anxiety over small things
- Persistent worry
- Intense and sometimes irrational fears
- Nightmares where before there were none
- Depression
- Hyperventilation or shortness of breathing
- Palpitations or pounding of heart
- The inability to have a sound night’s sleep
- Lackluster behavior and responses
- Trouble fitting in with other children
- Outbursts of Anger
- Self inflicted injuries
- Prone to falling ill often
- Stammer
- Draws into themselves, becomes introspective
- Nausea

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- Feelings of intense terror
- Trembling
- Cold shivers
- A feeling of numbness
- A desire to avoid certain situations or people
- Obsessive compulsive behavior

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or PTSD has been made most famous as occurring in Vietnam War veterans. With all the publicity surrounding the disorder and the Vietnam War veterans you might be forgiven for believing that PTSD only occurred in these veterans. This is not the case however as anyone can suffer from PTSD not only war veterans.

It is interesting to note however that there are clear accounts of PTSD-like symptoms occurring in war veterans dating back from the American Civil War. Not known as PTSD in those days this disorder was called “De Costa’s Syndrome” and was found to affect many veterans. There is also literature on such PTSD-like symptoms occurring in Holocaust victims and World War I and II veterans as well. It has also been proven that PTSD spans continents and races uncaring of where it strikes. You will find that a percentage of most war veterans from any nation suffer from PTSD. These same symptoms have also been described in ancient texts clearly indicating that Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is not a new syndrome and that it spans the ages.

To show you just how indiscriminate PTSD is I can tell you that approximately 7.8 percent of Americans will experience it, with women being twice as susceptible as men.

PTSD can occur for a variety of reasons and I’ve mentioned one already in the section called “Recent Traumatic Events”. Basically though what you need to know is that you don’t need to be a war veteran to suffer PTSD. If you’ve suffered a trauma of any kind there is a chance that you could suffer from PTSD.

The causes can be extreme and can span from rape to a car accident to the death of a loved one, or perhaps even a near death experience or abuse. Any one of these can cause PTSD in you. It doesn’t mean that you are 100% going to suffer from PTSD if you do suffer from a traumatic experience. What it does mean is that although you’ll almost certainly have a reaction to these events you won’t necessarily be plagued with the debilitating and sometimes all consuming symptoms of PTSD.

Most people who suffer from trauma find a natural valve or outlet to channel their fears and anxieties into and this can encompass many things as long it works for the person. For some people however, especially if you repress your emotions too much this outlet isn’t available and they might suffer from PTSD. To use a metaphor it’s like a kettle full of water which you place on to a stove. Your worries will stay hidden beneath the surface until something, a

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trigger, comes along to start the anxiety and fears simmering. You can still control it but at some point in time the kettle's got to boil and that's when the trouble starts. All that pent up steam has to have an outlet and in you that will manifest itself in a variety of manners all ultimately leading to PTSD.

In some cases PTSD can be a crippling and debilitating experience and can even inhibit your lifestyle causing you to shun people and sometimes even leading you into stark despair and depression.

If you suffer from PTSD or you know someone who does immediate help should be sought. There are many groups that you could join or therapy is also a good alternative. There are also medications that can help you to cope with your suffering as well as to ease your symptoms.

Don't suffer in silence talk to your doctor or someone close to you. It always helps.

Symptoms

Symptoms for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder include but are not limited to,

- Flashbacks to the event
- Feelings of intense terror
- Mind numbing fear
- Trembling
- Shivers
- Insomnia
- Irritability
- Nightmares
- Depression
- Extreme sensitivity to certain situations, or hypervigilance
- Anxiety
- Easily startled
- Disassociation of the world around you
- Intrusive memories of the event
- Difficulty concentrating
- Feeling a lot of negative emotions

Side-effects of Anxiety Disorders

Two very common side effects that you can get if you suffer from either anxiety or panic disorders are,

- Depression and,
- Substance Abuse

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The first effect is very common amongst anxiety sufferers with almost half the people who suffer from anxiety disorders also suffering from depression.

The second side effect – Substance Abuse – isn't as prevalent as it's really found more in anxiety patients who take prescription medications to help control their anxiety attacks. Don't be alarmed and don't get the wrong idea. I'm not saying that all people who use medicinal prescription drugs are addicted. What I am trying to convey is the idea that there is a very real chance that you can become addicted to these prescription drugs through no fault of your own.

Just to give you an idea of what's entailed in both of what I call "side effects" I've written an overview on both and perhaps they can be of use to you.

Depression

If you suffer from anxiety or panic disorders there's a very real chance that you might also be suffering from depression. To some extent the converse is also true – if you suffer from depression you're more open to suffer from anxiety disorders. I know I was depressed for a long time especially after I suffered from a particularly severe panic attack which would leave me all but helpless.

It doesn't necessarily follow however that if you have one that you'll get the other. Anxiety isn't always accompanied by depression. It's just that as a result of your anxiety you could also suffer from depression and this could be for a number of reasons. The most common reason being the inability to control yourself when you suffer from an attack. Another common reason occurs when you're highly aware that what you're going through is unreasoning but you're unable to stop or help yourself. If you've got that feeling that events are spiraling out of your control, then you could be headed for imminent depression if you don't take hold of your condition immediately.

Treatments for anxiety and depression are alike so you might get confused if you're prescribed anti-depressant tablets only to find out that they're the same as what's used for anxiety treatments.

Substance Abuse

Substance abuse is and always will be a thorn in my side and one of the reasons I don't like to take prescription medications to control my panic attacks. After suffering a particularly nasty experience while I was in college I decided then and there to never let a strong medication pass my lips if I could help it. I realize that it might seem drastic and overly melodramatic but at the time I was reeling from what had just happened and although time has passed I've never gone back on my promise.

I was sharing a room with one of my best friends you might remember the friend I mentioned in Kindergarten who was prone to hyperventilating? Well, we were sharing a room so I knew that she still suffered from panic attacks although I thought she had it under control. She seemed to get better as time wore on and didn't display as many signs of anxiety and stress as she used to.

Dealing With Anxiety Naturally!!

Needless to say I didn't pay all that much attention. We were both young but still old enough not to need a nagging person behind us at every turn. To cut a long story short I walked in one day after a particularly long weekend break to find her huddled helpless on the floor a prescription bottle next to her. She had been taking prescription medications for some time but was being pulled off of it. The bottle she had just dropped had held the last of her pills and she was already going through the signs of withdrawal symptoms.

I'm not saying this is the norm for everybody, and I'm not telling you to stop taking your medications. What I am saying however is that substance abuse can happen and sometimes entirely without your knowledge. After seeing how torn apart my friend was and how much she suffered in the following weeks was when I decided never to take prescription drugs again.

I just didn't need that kind of grief in my life especially not with everything else I would go through later on due to my frequent panic attacks. To this day I'm glad I didn't give in, even when it seemed like prescription drugs were the only way forward for me.

If you're taking prescription medications be aware of what can potentially happen to you if you're not careful and if you want to try different alternate treatments you'll find that I've covered a good number of those as well as the more normal treatment methods in the section called "Curing you Anxiety and Panic Disorders".

Please do bear in mind though that you should always consult a qualified medical practitioner before stopping or starting any medication and that my advice should in no way be taken as asking you to stop your medication.

Curing your Anxiety and Panic Disorders

You've admitted your problem and are now ready to move on with your life to graduate to the next step - curing your anxiety. You could come at it from a number of different angles and I've outlined the more popular ones that you can explore. I've started with Medicinal treatments that include prescription drugs and vitamins to be taken in a supplemental form.

Then I move on to Natural treatments which encompass many different treatment methods including herbal remedies, herbal teas, meditation and vitamins consumed naturally amongst many others. The next section on cures for your anxiety is all about Psychotherapy. Here I've explored all the aspects available to you in the forms of psychotherapy and of what benefit they can be to you.

I can't stress enough how important it is for you to consult with your doctor, a qualified medical professional or therapist before starting with any new treatment.

Medicinal Treatments

Now that we've gotten past the part where you learn all about what anxiety and panic is all about we can now get down to the real reason we're all here - to find a cure or preventative method for yourself. (Or even someone that you know).

To begin with let me start off by saying that there is no perfect cure for either disorder and that's as it should be. I realize you might be starting to feel a little disillusioned at this point but allow me to explain before we go too much further.

If we go back to one of the beginning sections you might remember that I mentioned that anxiety and panic - in normal quantities - were a part of our genetic make up and were probably a healthy part of the "fight or flight" instincts. After all if early man just stood still in the face of an oncoming saber toothed tiger we wouldn't be here would we.

If we take that reasoning one step further and assume that the fight-or-flight syndrome is there within us for a reason - namely to protect us - then we wouldn't really want to eliminate those feelings entirely, only enough so that we're able to function normally.

So having gotten that out of the way along with the fact that any and all treatments that I've stated within the following sections are merely bits and pieces of information that I've gathered along the way to curing my own condition, and that I am in no way a qualified medical practitioner, we can now begin.

Start with an Accurate Diagnosis

To start a proper course of treatment you'll need to get an accurate diagnosis of your condition first. Without this any treatment that you get could be the wrong one for you and could also prove to be potentially harmful to you in the long run. So before you start experimenting or buying any kind of drug go see your doctor first.

He/ She should be able to help you and will also be able to steer you towards the right path. Self-diagnosis is the worst kind there is and if you're at a stage where you can admit that you need help and can talk to someone else about it then your doctor could potentially be one of those people.

Treatments

Medicinal treatments to my mind at least, are those treatments that involve the use of drugs, be it prescription or otherwise. So now that you've spoken with your doctor and you've chosen the course that seems right for you, you can start with your treatments.

But what about for those of you who haven't come forward, who haven't been able to talk to someone just yet? What can you do? Hopefully by reading what I've put down in this book you will get a better idea of what your options are and you should be able to weigh them carefully before making a decision.

If you read the section entitled "Substance Abuse" you'll know that I'm not too hot on medicinal treatments. However I do realize that to some people these treatments are literally a life line and the only way they can get through each day without quietly losing their minds. So I've included this section just to show that I do know and understand what you're going through, I went through it myself, and I am sympathetic to your plight.

So what do these little marvels of medical science do to help you? Like I keep saying I'm not a doctor but I will take a shot at trying to explain what happens.

The neurons within our brain, or brain cells, use a type of neurotransmitter to communicate and when we take antidepressants they latch onto the part in these neurons that produce our anxiety. These medications are commonly known as anti-anxiety drugs or benzodiazepines, one class of these anti anxiety drugs.

Another important drug is of a different class altogether and is also known as Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors. These are supposed to help raise reduced serotonin levels. Serotonin is a chemical within your neurotransmitters that helps them to communicate.

By contrast the drug class buspirone helps to bring down high levels of serotonin within your brain.

Benzodiazepines

These were the drugs of choice for many doctors in the early days of looking into curing anxiety disorders. This was mainly due to the fact that numerous

Dealing With Anxiety Naturally!!

studies showed that people who were introduced to this drug did well and displayed a marked improvement in their conditions.

Doctors and scientists knew how the benzodiazepines worked – by blocking or inhibiting a part of the neurons thereby reducing the chances for anxiety to strike. Such was the success of these drugs that they were often used as sedatives as well. Taken in stronger doses benzodiazepines were also good for insomnia victims.

Up until recently in fact doctors still thought that benzodiazepines were the way to go and only relatively recently did they fully understand that these drugs could be and were highly addictive especially if taken over a long period of time. The misconception that they weren't addictive was also partly due to the fact that 65-75% of people who suffered from anxiety disorders and who were treated with it showed vast improvement in their conditions.

Since it also takes effect over a very short period of time when compared to other drugs benzodiazepines are a good short term drug that can help you get on your feet before looking for another longer term method without such far reaching implications.

Taken in proper doses and under strict medical supervision benzodiazepines will not prove too harmful to you but if taken off the drug abruptly you might feel some withdrawal symptoms.

If you are taking these and are feeling any adverse symptoms you should talk with your doctor as soon as possible and see about changing to a different medication that's right for you.

You might also know these drugs by their pharmaceutical names such as Xanax, Ativan and Klonopin. I didn't list any more of the drugs as they are really too numerous to count, besides which since new drugs are coming on the market all the time any list that I make now will be incomplete almost immediately you finish reading this.

SSRI - Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors

Rather a mouthful and thankfully shortened to and referred to by its acronym - SSRI. These drugs work by trying to raise serotonin levels within your brain.

If you are taking or thinking of taking this drug to help you with your anxiety or panic disorder then you need to be aware that like benzodiazepines SSRI's can also become addictive and if the drugs aren't handled in the right dosage you might even need to be weaned off it.

Side effects for this drug include but are not limited to nausea, weight loss, weight gain, diarrhea, allergic reactions and irritability. If you want to change your medication or feel that you're ready to stop your medication please remember to talk with your doctor first. There might be a greater need for you to continue with these than you're aware of.

Buspirone

This drug whilst relatively new on the scene has caught many people's imaginations and is one that is prescribed quite frequently. Unlike SSRI's and benzodiazepines the drug buspirone doesn't seem to include addiction on its list of side effects thereby ensuring that you won't need to be weaned off the drug. As an added bonus buspirones also don't cause any mental confusion even if taken for a length of time.

Buspirones work in direct contrast to SSRI's by lowering high levels of serotonin within your brain. Since doctors believe that it's heightened levels of serotonin within your brain that cause you to suffer from Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD), buspirones also have a positive effect in this sphere as their main job is to bring down the serotonin levels.

One of its drawbacks however, is that it does take a few weeks to provide effective relief from your symptoms. For some people this might seem like an eternity. If this is your case then I suggest you sit down with your doctor and discuss all your options before coming to a final decision.

Azaspirones

This type of drug is used mainly to treat General Anxiety Disorder (GAD), and the period of treatment usually takes about a few weeks. Within this period you should see your GAD symptoms slowly decreasing. Unlike benzodiazepines and SSRI's which can become habit forming, Azaspirones don't have that particular tendency and you can stop using it at any time without suffering from withdrawal symptoms.

The main point in this drug's favor is that it's well tolerated by most patients who take it. So taking Azaspirones won't impair your memory or your balance, and it won't cause drowsiness or give you possible side effects like many alcohol based drugs can. The side effects of this drug, are very minor and don't detract from its effectiveness.

Beta Blockers

This class of drugs is mainly used for in the treatment of palpitations, sweating and tremors in various individuals. They have also been prescribed for people who suffer from anxiety when placed in public situations. Their main use is for Social Phobia but if you're suffering from the symptoms of anxiety you can use beta blockers as well since they can reduce blood pressure and slow your pounding heartbeat too. If you suffer from medical conditions like asthma, congestive heart failure, diabetes, vascular disease, hyperthyroidism and angina pectoris you should not use beta blockers as they can interfere with the medications taken for any of these conditions.

Tricyclics

These drugs were used at first in the treatment of depression, however as they've been found to be effective in preventing panic attacks they've joined the ranks of medications that are prescribed for anxiety disorders. Treatment periods can usually take two to three weeks for improvement to be detected.

There are, however side effects that you should note before starting a course of treatment with this drug. They range from a dry mouth, dizziness, drowsiness to impaired sexual performance. Many people who have used this drug also state that one of the more annoying side effects from using Tricyclics is that of a weight gain.

Monoamine Oxidase Inhibitors –MAOI's

The dosages and whether you're even going to be taking this particular drug should be strictly under a doctor's guidance as there are certain dietary restrictions that need to be adhered to and your doctor might want to try another course of medication first.

If you do take MAOI's you will need to avoid using other types of medications. You'll also find that you need to curtail your drinking of wines and beers, and also any foods like cheese which contains Tyramine since you could be subject to migraine-like severe headaches.

If you can't afford medication

If you're absolutely dependent on your medication to keep you in balance there's a good chance that you're up to your eyeballs in medical and pharmaceutical bills. Medicines don't come cheap and accumulated over a period of time you could be spending a small fortune on medicine.

Not everyone can keep up with that lifestyle and not everyone can afford to let it go. There are a number of organizations and facilities that provide life sustaining drugs to the truly needful person.

If you're in the same boat you have no need to feel ashamed. Take advantage of these and bring your life back under your control. There's no need to suffer needlessly because you don't have the proper medication.

There are a few things that you can do if you can't afford your medication and I've listed them below,

- Talk with your doctor and be upfront as s/he may have a solution to your dilemma
- Find out if your pharmaceutical company has a special program that you're eligible for
- Contact your state pharmaceutical board they may be able to assist you
- Talk with your doctor about replacing certain medicines with a generic brand

Dealing With Anxiety Naturally!!

- Think about applying to Medicaid

All of these are viable options and now that you've come so far in your treatment it would be a shame to stop it altogether. Don't let pride stand in the way of your recovery.

Vitamins and Minerals in Supplemental form

Although not strictly a medicinal treatment I decided to place it in this section as here I'm looking at helping you prevent your anxiety attacks by taking the necessary vitamins and minerals in a supplemental form.

In the "Natural Treatments" section of this book I've looked into how you can take your Vitamins, well, naturally in a word. The types of Vitamins mentioned in both sections are basically the same with the only difference being in the form you take it in.

So the Vitamin you'll need most in your fight against your anxiety is all types of Vitamin B. These are important for your nervous system and help stabilize the lactate levels in your body thereby stabilizing your anxiety attacks.

All of the Vitamins I've mentioned can be found in supplemental capsule, pill or liquid form and are readily available to buy from your nearest drugstore.

- Vitamin B6 - also known as pyridoxine, has a calming effect and is one of the more important vitamins
- Vitamin B-1 - thiamine, helps reduce anxiety, also has a calming effect
- Vitamin B-3 in the form of Niacinamide - produces certain brain chemicals and exerts a calming effect when taken in large doses (Niacinamide shouldn't to be confused with Niacin as large doses of Niacin can prove to be harmful)
- Vitamin C - taken in large doses has a tranquilizing effect, and is necessary for functioning of adrenal glands, along with proper brain functioning
- Potassium - helps the adrenal glands
- Calcium & Magnesium - both these help in the prevention of nervous tension and helps to relieve anxiety
- Selenium - powerful antioxidant, protects the heart muscle, found to be depleted in people suffering from anxiety

These are only the more important of vitamins and minerals that you need to take. For proper dosage amounts talk with your doctor as any or all of these can affect your medication if taken in the wrong dosage.

Natural Treatments

Natural treatments can encompass many areas and are also sometimes called Alternative Treatments, alternative in context to western medical treatments that is. These treatments are often thought of as radical and in some cases have no bearing on logic or scientific fact whatsoever. Yet more and more you'll find that people are turning to these alternative treatments to cure their various ailments.

If you are indeed looking into trying these natural treatments for yourself but are taking medication for your condition I would strongly recommend that you consult your doctor before engaging in any of these. Even something that seems as harmless as meditation could have some adverse side effect on you. This applies most emphatically if you're thinking of ingesting or applying any of the herbal remedies I've mentioned here.

There's no hard and fast rule that says if you try a natural treatment method once you'll have to keep at it. If you don't like the method simply stop going for treatments and taking any medicines or herbs prescribed. And don't forget to always check with your doctor first before doing anything drastic. He'll probably have a better handle on the situation than you think and can help you through these troubling times.

Remember that I'm not a doctor or qualified expert and can only guide you according to what I've experienced. One or maybe all of these alternatives might be wrong for you, so take a minute before you continue to make sure that you're not harming yourself more in the process.

Herbal Remedies

If you're looking at herbal remedies to cure your anxiety attacks there are a few available that have been known to soothe and calm you to the point where you can control your responses. These may or may not give any long term benefits. Information is sparse and you may want to visit an experienced herbalist before continuing.

It should also be noted that these herbs whilst good for most people might not be ideal for pregnant women or people suffering from other conditions, and also should be avoided if you're taking medication of any kind.

If you're thinking of taking any of these herbal remedies in tincture form you should be careful during pregnancy as tinctures contain high levels of alcohol.

I've listed below the herbs that I've found to be beneficial and have gone into some detail for each herb after this list.

- Chamomile
- Valerian
- Lavender
- St John's Wort
- Kava Kava

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- Passion Flower
- Motherwort
- Lemon Balm
- Linden
- Oatstraw
- Skullcap

Please also note that wherever I've mentioned that a particular herb can be taken in tea form, I've included the recipe for each herb in the section entitled "Herbal Teas". I did this in an effort to make the tea recipes more accessible to you so you wouldn't need to be forever flipping through the pages to find the tea recipe you want.

Chamomile

Known for centuries for its healing properties Chamomile is considered a universal cure-all by most herbalists. It's used as a panacea for a range of maladies going from the common cold to insomnia to sore throats. Chamomile has also been known to be used in cases of anxiety attacks to help soothe and calm the victim.

With two different types of Chamomile available – German Chamomile and Roman Chamomile – you might find yourself confused on the issue of which type to use. There's really not much between them although German Chamomile is thought to be stronger and is used more often whereas Roman Chamomile is used most in England.

Whichever type you decide to use it's always best to get correct dosages from an experienced herbalist. Also since Chamomile is considered a uterine stimulant, women who are pregnant should stay away from it as it might cause an abortion. The effects of Chamomile on breast feeding are also as yet unknown and so should be avoided then as well.

If taking various medications for an illness, remember to first consult your doctor before taking Chamomile, as drug interactions haven't yet been verified properly.

Generally chamomile is taken in the form of an herbal tea infusion or as a liquid extract. Capsules, tablets, mouth washes, tinctures and Chamomile baths are also a number of different ways in which you can use the herb.

The most common usage, in the form of a tea or an infusion, is also easy to prepare at home by yourself. Drinking Chamomile tea is a great way to relax after a tiring day and can quickly become habit forming (in a good way of course!). And since Chamomile is easy enough to grow yourself it makes this herbal remedy an easy option if you grow to truly like it.

It should also be noted that if you're allergic to plants in the Asteraceae (Compositae) family, examples of these being Ragwort, Asters and Chrysanthemums you should avoid Chamomile in any form as this may bring about skin allergies and difficulty in breathing amongst other symptoms.

Dealing With Anxiety Naturally!!

Valerian

Used commonly to relieve restlessness and anxiety Valerian is a naturally soothing remedy. Tested by scientists on a variety of conditions Valerian has been proven scientifically to aid in cases of insomnia, depression, anxiety and stress. Although with some of these conditions such as in the case of anxiety or depression, Valerian was teamed with St John's Wort to help reduce symptoms. Valerian also combined with Passion Flower showed better results than just Valerian alone.

The use of Valerian whilst pregnant is not recommended as it has been said to cause birth defects. If you suffer from allergies to plants in the Valerianaceae family you may also be allergic to Valerian.

Correct dosages of Valerian should be worked out with the help of a trained herbalist. The most common forms that Valerian is taken include herbal teas or infusions, and also in capsule or liquid form.

Lavender

A common favorite of many herbalists Lavender can be utilized in any form and has been transferred into Aromatherapy oils, Perfumes, Talc's, Lotions and many more items besides.

Used for centuries to aid in soothing and calming people, it has also now been widely accepted that Lavender is a natural remedy in the treatment of anxiety, depression and even insomnia. Although it was only recently accepted as such by scientists, herbalists have known and used it for these purposes for a long time.

Lavender is an easy and accessible herb to find and most people grow it in their gardens for its lovely aroma and vibrant purple color. And since it's the flower in its dried or fresh form that's used in medicinal applications it makes it that much easier if you have it in your backyard.

How to take your Lavender:

- As a tea
- As a bath: Using 2 tablespoons each of lavender buds and flowers place into a clean muslin bag (pouch) along with freshly ground oatmeal and hang just below the water line of your bath. Induces relaxation and soothes the nerves especially if you rub herb filled bag over your tensed muscles
- Inhalation: In 2-3 cups of boiling water add a handful of the dried Lavender and inhale

St John's Wort

Also known as Hypericum, St John's Wort is one of the most highly studied herbs of the twentieth century. Regarded highly for its relaxational effects and its effects on the mood regulating hormones within your brain St John's Wort

Dealing With Anxiety Naturally!!

has also been known to relieve everyday stresses and frustrations. If you're pregnant though you shouldn't be taking this herb as there aren't enough studies conducted yet to show a safe usage for you or your baby. Also a known side effect from exceeding your proper dosage of St John's Wort is photosensitivity in some people.

Generally St John's Wort is available from any drug store in capsule or tea form. To relieve stress and tension St John's Wort can also be used as massage oil by infusing with olive oil.

Kava Kava

Kava Kava or Cava root has been around for thousands of years and is a most popular medicinal herb especially on the islands of Hawaii where it can be found. Traditionally used to cure asthma the Kava Kava herb has now been found to be beneficial in the relief of stress, anxiety and insomnia. Kava Kava also has a growing popularity among scientists today as a natural anti-depressant.

Generally taken in capsule or pill form, Kava Kava can also be taken as a tincture or a tea. People who shouldn't take Kava Kava include those who are depressed, people who take barbiturates, pregnant or breast feeding women, or if you plan to take it for longer than three months.

If used as a decoction 2g -4g should be taken a maximum of 3 times daily. The Kava Kava decoction can be made by boiling the herb in water.

Passion Flower

Found to be good in the treatment of anxiety and insomnia Passion Flower can be used in the form of dried herbs, tincture or as a liquid extract.

Side effects of this herb can include allergies such as skin rashes, asthma attacks and irritated sinuses. Drowsiness or sedation might also occur, and the Passion Flower has also been known to stimulate the uterus. Pregnant women are therefore advised to stay away from using any form of the Passion Flower herb.

It has also been found that a combination of Valerian and Passion Flower are more effective in combating anxiety than just using either herb on its own.

Motherwort

Motherwort also known as Lion's ear or Lion's Tail is a perennial and is commonly found in Britain. You'll be interested to know that it's also a weed! Generally found to be good as a mood relaxant Motherwort is taken by many women to ease the symptoms of PMS. It's also been known as a traditional cure for anxiety, as it can calm and soothe jangled nerves. The reason behind this being the alkaloids present in Motherwort which have a sedating

Dealing With Anxiety Naturally!!

effect upon you. It can also help to lower blood pressure so care should be taken if you're also taking medication to regulate high blood pressure.

The Motherwort herb is another medicinal herb that should be avoided by pregnant women or women who are trying to get pregnant as it induces uterine contractions.

As easy to grow in your garden as Lavender (it is after all a weed!), Motherwort can easily overtake your garden lock stock and barrel (the weed effect again). The efforts though are fully worth it as you will have an endless supply of Motherwort right on your doorstep.

And if you find that it's simply too much trouble to grow (or cull) the Motherwort, then you always have the option of popping down to your nearest health store where you can find it in the form of teas (that's handy isn't it?), capsules, extracts and pills. Only remember that taking too much Motherwort can cause diarrhea so follow dosage instructions carefully.

Lemon Balm

A member of the mint family and used as a stress reliever Lemon Balm is also used to alleviate depression and bring about a natural state of calm and is considered good for anxiety sufferers. This very beautiful herb was used for a variety of medical conditions ranging from sleeping difficulties and heart problems to flatulence. Herbalists also tend to apply topical applications of this herb to the temples to aid in cases of insomnia and fraught nerves.

Lemon Balm can be combined with the Valerian to combat insomnia as well. By using this particular combination over a two week time period you should become calm and relaxed prior to sleeping, improving the quality of your sleep and thereby reducing your insomnia.

Suggested usages of Lemon Balm can be as a tea, as well as a tincture. While the tea can be drunk several times a day, the tincture should only be used in 2-3 ml quantities three times per day, although you should always consult with a trained herbalist to get proper dosage amounts for you. The recommended amount of Lemon Balm for insomnia is about 160mg to 200mg of concentrated extract taken at least one hour before going to sleep.

If you suffer from suffer from gastritis or ulcers you should avoid using this herb. This applies if you also have an allergy to willow bark, aspirin or other Salicylates.

Linden

While many people might call Linden blossoms lime flowers they are in fact two distinctly different types of plants. The very fragrant Linden flower has been used since ancient times as a calming agent to relieve symptoms of stress and anxiety, as well as for common colds, indigestion and colicky pain in the stomach. It's also one of the few herbs considered good to give children but remember to check with your doctor first before doing so.

Dealing With Anxiety Naturally!!

For either children or adults one of the best ways to take Linden is in tea form as it tastes quite pleasant.

For acute cases of anxiety you can drink several cups of Linden tea daily for up to one week. If you're planning on taking the tea for longer, between 3 – 6 months, you'll need to cut down your intake of the tea to just three cups per day.

Alternatively a tincture or a fluid extract of Linden may be used. You will need 3/4–1 teaspoonful (3–5 ml) of Linden tincture three times daily.

Oat Straw

High in Vitamins A, D and E, and also Zinc and Calcium, Oatstraw is just as beneficial for your body as taking Oats, and is a general pick-me-up in the health department. It is also used to relieve depression, anxiety and stress, and is especially good for disorders of the nervous system.

Herbalists of old used oat straw to treat nervous exhaustion, insomnia and what was generally called "weakness of the nerves", but what we call, anxiety. For treatment purposes the top green parts of the plant are harvested just before reaching full flower and dried.

Tea made from Oatstraw was thought to be good in treating rheumatic conditions and water retention as well as anxiety, stress and depression.

Tincture made from the green tops of oats is also used to help with withdrawal symptoms resulting from tobacco addiction and can be taken as often as three times per day. Dosages vary but generally ½ – 1 teaspoonful, that's 3ml – 5ml) of the tincture should be taken. As always consult a trained professional before taking any of these.

Oatstraw can also be used in your bath to treat your insomnia or stress and anxiety. It can also be used to treat a variety of skin conditions such as eczema, and can also be used for the treatment of burns.

If you prefer your medication to look like real medication, Oatstraw comes in capsule and tablet form as well.

Skullcap (Scullcap)

Long used as a medicinal herb by Native Americans Skullcap is also a member of the Mint family. It is used to help soothe and calm jangled nerves and relieve anxiety and stress. For the treatment of insomnia Skullcap is combined with Valerian.

Skullcap is said to have a slightly bitter taste, but is particularly beneficial as a tea especially when blended with other herbs. This variety of Skullcap shouldn't be confused with its cousin Chinese Skullcap as both herbs have different properties and will act differently when used as a treatment.

Dealing With Anxiety Naturally!!

For treatment purposes Skullcap can be taken in the form of tea or as a tincture which is made from fresh Skullcap. Only 1/3 – 3/4 of a teaspoon, or 2 ml–4ml, of the Skullcap tincture may be taken three times a day.

You can safely use skullcap in the amounts stated above, however pregnant and breast-feeding mothers should avoid using skullcap as there is limited information about its safety towards babies.

There have also been a few cases of liver damage associated with Skullcap but studies are yet inconclusive and it may be due to adulteration of the herb with germander, or Teucrium Chamaedrys, which is also sold as pink Skullcap.

When buying herbs make sure that you only get the best available and make sure that your herbalist is a qualified professional able to help you properly.

Herbal Teas

Amongst the variety of other herbal remedies Herbal Teas are one of the easiest and best sources of natural treatments as they are easy to prepare and most don't even taste that nasty!

Some of the herbs I've mentioned for the use of tea in this section were also mentioned in the "Herbal Remedies" section. For greater ease of use of this book however, I've placed all the tea recipes into this one section so you won't need to be forever going from section to section to find what you need.

For possible side effects and suitability though you should consult the appropriate sections. Although I've marked this in each section where Chamomile is used let me just repeat that some people are allergic to Chamomile and all varieties of the Chamomile family (which I have mentioned in the Herbal Remedies section called "Chamomile"). Care should be taken so as not ingest this herb if you are allergic and a doctor should be consulted immediately if it's taken by accident.

Here is a list of the teas that I've included and hope that it may in some way be helpful to you.

- Green Tea
- Ginger Tea
- Chamomile Tea
- Lavender Tea
- Lemon Balm Tea
- Linden Tea
- Oatstraw Tea
- Scullcap (Skullcap) Tea

Dealing With Anxiety Naturally!!

- Motherwort Tea
- Kava Kava Tea
- Mellow Mood Tea
- St. John's Wort
- Uplifting Tea recipe
- Traditional Indian Spiced Tea (Chai)
- Ayurvedic Tea

Green Tea

Needed: 1 teaspoon loose Green Tea leaves / 1 teabag
 1 cup boiling water
 Sugar or honey to taste

Place teabag or tea leaves in the cup of boiling water and allow it to steep for about 2-3 minutes. Remove tea bag, or strain loose tea leaves, add sugar or honey to taste and drink.

Ginger Tea

Needed: 1 inch piece of dried ginger root peeled and crushed
 (or 1 teaspoon powdered ginger)
 1 cup water
 1 teaspoon loose tea leaves or a teabag
 Sugar or Honey

Boil water and add the tea along with the crushed or powdered ginger. Allow the tea to steep for 3-4 minutes before straining (if needed) and add sugar or honey to taste before drinking.

Alternatively:

Place about 1 teaspoon of grated Ginger root in 8 ounces of boiling water and leave to steep for approximately 10 minutes.

Strain and add sugar or honey for taste.

Note: Although the two recipes might seem the same this last Ginger Tea recipe doesn't use any form of the normal everyday variety of tea that we drink.

Dealing With Anxiety Naturally!!

Chamomile Tea

Needed: 1 teaspoon dried Chamomile flowers
 1 cup water
 lemon juice and honey

Boil the water in a saucepan and add the flowers. With the lid firmly on boil for a further 30-45 seconds. Remove from the heat and allow the tea to steep for a further minute. Strain the tea before drinking adding a little bit of lemon juice or honey for extra taste.

For a further sedating and relaxing effect add a few Lemon Balm leaves in place of the lemon juice.

Note: You might be allergic to Chamomile and should ascertain this before drinking the tea.

Lavender Tea

Needed: 1-2 teaspoons of dried or fresh Lavender
 1 cup boiling water

Place the Lavender in the cup of boiling water. Steep for about 3-5 minutes (you can even steep it up to 15 minutes if you want) before straining and drinking.

Lemon Balm Tea

Needed: 1 teaspoon fresh Lemon Balm
 1 cup water

Boil water and Lemon Balm allow it to steep for a few minutes before straining and drinking. Sugar or Honey add flavor to your tea.

Linden Tea

Needed: 1-2 teaspoons of dried or fresh Linden
 1 cup boiling water

Add the Linden flowers to the water and allow it to steep for 15-20 minutes before first straining the tea and drinking. It's especially beneficial if the Linden tea is drunk whilst it's still hot.

Oatstraw Tea

Needed: 1 heaped tablespoon of dried Oatstraw
 1 cup of boiling water

Mix the Oatstraw with the boiling water and allow it to steep between 5 – 10 minutes before straining and drinking.

Dealing With Anxiety Naturally!!

Skullcap (Scullcap) Tea

Needed: 1 cup boiling water
 1-2 teaspoons of dried Skullcap

Place the Skullcap into the cup of boiling water and steep for about 10-15 minutes. Strain the tea and then drink.

Skullcap tea should be taken no more than 3 times per day.

Motherwort Tea

To use Motherwort as a tea you can use either the leaves, flowers or the stem.

Needed: 2 teaspoons of dried Motherwort
 1 cup boiling water

Place the dried Motherwort in a cup of boiling water and steep for a few minutes.

If you're taking it daily no more than two cups should be taken per day.

Kava Kava Espresso

To quickly relieve stress or anxiety Kava Kava can be used in espresso form where there is traditionally little water.

Needed: 1 heaped tablespoon of powdered Kava Kava
 1/4 teaspoon of lemonade mix (of your choice)
 1/3 cup water

Place the powdered Kava Kava into a cup along with the lemonade mix, add the water and stir well.

If drunk immediately the generally "different" taste that first time users notice of the Kava Kava will not be noticed here.

Mellow Mood Tea

A well blended tea comprising of some of the most beneficial herbs, this tea will be sure to become one of your favorites. Effects include general relaxation, lessening of stress and anxiety, and will have the added benefits of allowing you to have a sound night's sleep.

Needed: 1 teaspoon Chamomile flowers
 1 teaspoon Lavender spikes
 1 teaspoon Kava Kava leaves
 1 teaspoon Lemon Balm leaves
 1 teaspoon Marjoram
 1 spray Valerian flowers
 1 quart water

Dealing With Anxiety Naturally!!

Boil the quart of water in a saucepan and add all the herbs. Leave the mixture to steep for 5-10 minutes or as desired. Strain the tea and drink it either hot or cold. Extra tea can be refrigerated and drunk later.

Note: Check whether you're allergic to Chamomile or Valerian first before you make this tea, or barring that leave out the Chamomile and the Valerian altogether.

St John's Wort

Needed: 2 teaspoons of dried St John's Wort
 1 cup boiling water
 Sugar or Honey

This tea can be made simply enough by mixing the dried herb with the boiling water and allowing it to steep for about 10 minutes.

Mixing in a little sugar or honey after straining will also enhance its flavor.

An Uplifting Tea Recipe

Needed: 2 part Lemon Balm
 2 part Chamomile
 1 part Jasmine
 1 part Oatstraw
 1 part St. John's Wort

Steep 1 -2 teaspoons of the herb mixture in a cup of boiling water for 2-4 minutes before straining and drinking.

Note: You could be allergic to Chamomile, so check before drinking this tea or leave the Chamomile out of the tea altogether.

Traditional Indian Spiced Tea (Chai)

Needed: 8 teabags (or equivalent loose leaf tea)
 8 whole Cloves
 ¼ teaspoon ground Cardamom
 ½ teaspoon ground ginger
 ½ pint of Condensed Milk
 Honey
 4 cups boiling water

Steep the tea for about 5 minutes in the boiling water and strain. Add cloves, cardamoms and ginger and simmer for a further 8-10 minutes. Add the condensed milk and sweeten with the honey if needed.

Ayurvedic Tea

Needed: 1 part Valerian (Tagar)
 1 part Nutgrass (Musta)
 1 cup boiling water

Steep ½ teaspoon of the herb mixture in the boiling water for 5 -10 minutes before straining and drinking.

Not suitable if you suffer from allergies to Valerian.

Nutrition and Your Diet

You're reading the title of this section and wondering why it's even here after all what does food have to do with anxiety disorders? I can tell you that it has a lot to do with anxiety disorders and stress. You might not realize it but what we eat contributes a lot to the way we are. I know that sounds confusing but perhaps I can explain it a little better.

You need food to survive, right? Just like your car needs gas to go from point A to point B. What happens if you put the wrong type of gas in your car? It breaks down, perhaps immediately perhaps over a period of time, but it still breaks down. The same thing happens to our bodies as well. If we don't feed it the right fuels it's going to start acting up and sometimes this can manifest itself in a variety of manners some physically and some emotionally. Anxiety disorders could sometimes be your body rebelling against the wrong fuel being dumped in.

So, basically we can divide this section into two major groups – What to Eat and What Not to Eat.

If you eat foods that aren't nutritious, if you stuff your body full of items that are "poisonous" to eat, (by poisonous I mean to imply processed and other non-organic foods), in the long run you're going to suffer. On the other hand if you choose carefully exactly what you put into your body not only will your body feel better but so will your mind.

We eat processed foods by the truckload almost every year but our bodies just weren't designed to handle that much stress placed on them in the way of preservatives and what not. Maybe you remember that old saying about the "straw that broke the camel's back"? Well, sooner or later your body's going to protest at such rough treatment and you're going to have to figure out a way to pay it back. And that's what I've dedicated this section to – diet and nutrition and how it effects anxiety disorders.

What Not to Eat

At a guess there have been many people haranguing you to stop your coffee guzzling. Substitute the word "coffee" with anything else that's seems remotely bad or has been on the news as having bad side effects. Let's be honest here though, anything and everything is bad if taken in large quantities, as well as too little quantities. What you really need is to follow a middling path but unfortunately we're only human and we all have our failings. So unless you're someone like the Dalai Lama there's a good chance that you'll be indulging yourself in some way or other. I know my weakness is chocolate and all you have to do is wave a piece under my nose to have me following you without question!

But if you suffer from anxiety or panic attacks you might want to reconsider your diet and alter it accordingly since there are some foods and drinks that have been proven to increase symptoms or even just cause them. And unfortunately, you guessed it my coffee loving friends, coffee is one of them. In fact just about any product containing caffeine isn't good for you if you're prone to either anxiety or panic attacks. And it doesn't get any better if you must know, although the damage isn't too bad really, but there are definitely

Dealing With Anxiety Naturally!!

some foods that you really should try avoiding where possible or even try just completely cutting them out of your diet altogether.

So what foods are bad for you? Since I like to be helpful and I thought you might want to share in my misery over the coffee ban - coffee's my next favorite thing after chocolate - I've compiled a handy list that you can consult at the drop of a hat.

- First up is everybody's favorite - coffee, although you can have a maximum of a 100mg per day. So what does that translate to? Approximately 1 cup of percolated coffee, although a 50 mg dose is preferred
- And if you're a tea drinker and think you've finally got the drop on all of us coffee drinkers I really hate to burst your bubble but you're also included in the coffee boat as tea contains caffeine. Just to be clear I'm talking about the black, white and green tea¹ variety and not the herbal variety
- Alcohol is the next must go item on your list
- Followed very closely by cola beverages. Both this and alcohol also fall into the caffeine class
- Nicotine is the next one and is definitely a non issue. It tends to leave you more anxious as well as making you sleep less and your heart work harder than it should
- Salt is next up and I could have wept when I heard this since I love my salty foods. Salt drives up your blood pressure and strains your heart
- Prescription drugs containing caffeine or amphetamines can be just as bad, as are drugs such as cocaine
- Processed foods as well, although that one might be slightly difficult seeing as how we live in a fast-food culture
- Monosodium Glutamate or MSG is also bad for you and can generally be found in Chinese takeaway foods and restaurants. You always have the option of specifying "no MSG" with your order
- Refined sweet foods such as white sugar. Try brown sugar or honey as a substitute. I've found they taste better and now I avoid refined sugar like the plague
- And for some people dairy items seem to be key for their anxiety symptoms

What to Eat

So that's the list of what we can't (or shouldn't) eat. What about the list of what we can eat? Does it get any worse or can we survive without our grease

¹ The Black, White and Green tea varieties are all produced from the same plant – the Camellia Sinensis, which contains caffeine

Dealing With Anxiety Naturally!!

dripping french fries smothered in salt and washed down with a scalding cup of coffee?

For a list of foods that include the natural vitamins that our body craves if you just flip through to the next section “Vitamins Naturally”, you should be okay. But there are also other foods that are good for you and I’ve mentioned some here just in case they’re not included in the “Vitamins Naturally” section.

- Wholegrain foods
- Avocado
- Papaya (Paw Paw)
- Fish such as salmon, cod and trout
- Garlic
- Eggs
- Carrots
- Onions
- Organic foods of any kind are better if you can get them
- Oats
- Water. This is a natural boost to your system and most people don’t drink enough resorting instead to sweetened drinks or sodas
- Juices are also a good alternative although nothing can beat water for its regenerative qualities

As well as the foods that we can and can not eat there’s also another contributing factor and that’s how you eat, as in your eating habits. So it looks like your mother was right and you shouldn’t eat on the run, or chew your food too fast, or drink too much water etc. with your meal. These bad eating habits can also contribute to your condition by making your body work overtime to keep up with you.

Vitamins Naturally

In an earlier section called “Vitamins and Minerals in Supplemental Form” I listed the various vitamins needed to be taken in order to reduce your anxiety disorders. In that section I mentioned that the vitamins could be taken in capsule or pill form. Here I will show you how you can take these vitamins in a more natural manner by including them in your everyday diet.

It should be noted that Vitamins are an important part of your diet and help keep the body in balance. Simple ways to ensure you’re getting the correct amounts of Vitamins into you is to eat a well balanced healthy diet. Almost without your realizing it you’ll be getting the proper dosage of the necessary vitamins.

- Vitamin B-1 (thiamine) - can be found in fortified cereals and bread, pork, legumes and nuts

Dealing With Anxiety Naturally!!

- Vitamin B6 (pyridoxine) - can be found in fish, eggs, pork, poultry, oats, and wholegrain products as well as in nuts, seeds and bananas
- Vitamin B-3 (niacinamide) - can be found in poultry, fish, lamb, milk, eggs, potatoes, legumes and brewer's yeast
- Vitamin C - can be found in tomatoes, citrus fruits, and citrus juices, berries, broccoli, potatoes, spinach and green and red peppers
- Calcium - dairy products such as milk and cheese, along with yogurts, ice creams, mineral water and tinned fish have been found to contain calcium
- Magnesium - this vital mineral can be found in nuts, beans, seeds, wholegrain products, avocado, fish and leafy green vegetables amongst others
- Potassium - potassium rich foods include bananas, whole meal pasta, bran flakes, oven chips and baked potato, along with veal, raisins and figs
- Selenium - can be found in red meat, fish, shell fish, grains and garlic as well as chicken and eggs

Ayurveda

If you're looking for a well established new-age or holistic healing method then Ayurveda is probably the way for you. Carrying with it centuries old traditions of curing various ailments Ayurveda is a respected treatment method and of late is gaining popularity amongst western practitioners as well.

In the case of either anxiety or panic disorders Ayurveda works to bring about balance in your system, particularly in the "Vata" portion of your system.

That probably went right over your head because I know it did mine when I first heard of it. I was sitting there thinking "huh?" with a great blank look on my face. This was kindly taken into account by the Ayurveda practitioner whom I was meeting and I was given a concise explanation which I will now try my utmost best to pass on to you.

Since Ayurveda considers all life to be a union of your mind, body and soul where all three in harmony, promotes general well-being, it has divided your bodily functions into three different main categories. These three categories haven't been divided into mind, body and soul categories as you would think but into different, logical categories which I have named below,

- Vata Dosha - initiates and promotes the overall biological functions and activities
- Pitta Dosha - is responsible for proper metabolism, and certain individual traits of the person
- Kapha Dosha - balances fluids such as water, along with fats, and also promotes healthy growth of body tissues

Dealing With Anxiety Naturally!!

These three categories in turn depend upon various other functions and factors which you will only truly be able to understand with time and experience. Suffice it to say that although I understood what was being explained to me I find myself unable to explain in any great detail exactly what Ayurvedic practices entails. If you're interested in finding out more about the real workings behind Ayurveda and its practices there are a number of books available on the subject as well as experienced practitioners who can help you.

Like I mentioned earlier, in the case of either anxiety or panic disorders the Vata Dosha system is the one that seems to be out of sync and needs correcting. There are many ways to do this and I've mentioned only a few of these below.

- Massage - given generally before the morning bath, or just before going to bed at night, the massage oil used for Vata Dosha is Sesame Oil. A goodly 6-7ounces of warmed oil is needed and should be rubbed all over you body. The oil shouldn't be too hot when applied. The massage can be done either by yourself or a trained masseuse although the later option will help you to relax better if you can bring yourself to go to a masseuse
- For a healing "quick fix" if you don't have the time for an all over body massage, then rub the oil thoroughly into your scalp in a soothing motion, and proceed to do the same for your feet
- A relaxing bath - this is also a good way to get rid of stress and anxiety and will also help to bring your Vata Dosha back into balance. Add 1/3 cups each of ginger and baking soda and relax in the bath for 10-15 minutes. Generally good after a long tension filled day
- Tea - another good way to relax and draw all the anxiety from your body is tea, and this tea will give you an all round uplifted feeling. Use 1 part Valerian (Tagar) to 1 part Nutgrass (Musta). Steep 1/2 teaspoon of this in a cup of boiling water for between 5-10 minutes. Strain and drink. This tea can be drunk twice a day if needed. *Note:* I've also given this tea recipe in the "Herbal Teas" section
- Chamomile Tea is also recommended and I have included a recipe for this in the section marked "Herbal Teas"
- Orange Juice with a teaspoon of honey and a pinch of Nutmeg is said to be good for a racing heartbeat and is probably the easiest method for you to try in an emergency as all the ingredients can be found quickly and easily within your home
- Almond milk is also said to promote general well being within you and is easy to make although the preparation time isn't as fast as the orange juice mix. Blend 10 raw (not roasted) almonds which have been soaking overnight and which have been peeled, with 1 cup of milk, and a pinch each of saffron, ginger and nutmeg. Drink when the almonds are finely blended

Dealing With Anxiety Naturally!!

- Avoid fried or over cooked foods along with foods which have been overly spiced
- As a change in diet consuming Gotu Kola (Gotu Cola) has also been said to bring your Vata Dosha back into balance. Since this herb isn't readily available to most of us it can also be taken in capsule or tablet form. However where the fresh herb is available usage as a nutritious food is best

Aromatherapy

I have to say that Aromatherapy is one of my all time favorite ways to de-stress. It helps to calm me and at the same time makes my life that much bearable. I know I sound like a walking advertisement for the power of Aromatherapy but that's simply how I feel. All I need to do when I feel my world closing in around me and the strains of anxiety bubbling up within me is to light my Aromatherapy oil burner and let myself drift away on a relaxing cloud.

A simple way to understand the meaning of Aromatherapy is to take it exactly as you hear it. Basically it's a therapy based on and around pleasant aromas and involving the usage of essential oils. These essential oils can be used either singly or as a blend which you can either make yourself or buy pre-blended. The decision depends entirely on your preferences as there isn't much of a difference between them.

If you don't like perfumes or don't like oils then I would suggest staying from this treatment method. If you do like it however, there's only one simple hard and fast rule - choose an oil or oils that you like and most importantly that smell good to you. Don't use an oil just because it's supposed to have certain healing properties, this won't work. If you don't like the smell you can never truly appreciate Aromatherapy. So while healing properties are also important the "smell factor" is more important since the aim here to become relaxed. For instance no matter what I was told about its healing properties I'd never use a Lavender essential oil anywhere near my mixtures - I just can't stand the smell!

Aromatherapy can work in many ways, and before we go too deep into what essential oils are best for stress and anxiety I'd just like to talk about how you can incorporate it into your daily life.

- My favorite one for the home is to use a tea-light diffuser, or an oil burner. This charming piece of pottery looks good on your shelves and adds distinction to your Aromatherapy. Basically all you need to do is pour a few drops of your favorite blend of oils into the little well at the top of the oil burner and light the small tea light candle that's at the bottom. Within a few minutes your whole house should smell of the rich soothing aromas. There are of course different diffusers available than the one I just mentioned and you can buy all manner of products from an

Dealing With Anxiety Naturally!!

Aromatherapy store or specialty shop or even from the grocer down the corner! You'd be amazed at what they stock, if you just take the time to look

- Then you always have the option of using it as a bath oil. A few drops mixed with a carrier oil added to your bath water can be very relaxing at the end of the day
- Perhaps even as a bath salt if you prefer. Just as calming as the bath oils and just as easy to prepare. To make the bath salts you'll need to use slightly coarse sea salt mixed in with your oil blend and carrier oil and use as you would normal bath salts
- A soothing, relaxing massage oil is next in line as my favorite and it can really work wonders for you. This can also be used in conjunction with the Ayurveda massage treatment I mentioned in the "Ayurveda" section simply by adding a few drops of your own oil blend with the Sesame oil used to treat the Vata Dosha system. The Sesame Oil can be used as carrier oil in this case
- Another method is to use your oils as an air freshener without resorting to the diffuser to do the job for you. For this method all you need to do is mix your oils with distilled water or a combination of distilled water and alcohol such as vodka and use a clean bottle with a spray nozzle attachment
- Inhalation is also another good way to use your oils although it can be overpowering for some people. Add a few drops of your oil to a 2 pint bowl of boiling water, cover your head and inhale for a few minutes. Don't get too close to the bowl or stay too long under the towel as this isn't good for you
- And if you need it, a "scent" burst while you're away from home can also work wonders for you. You can do this by using a small roll-on or carrying a small vial filled with your oils. Mix your blended oils with a carrier oil and ideally store it in an amber or cobalt blue glass bottle. The oils tend to deteriorate and lose their potency in a clear bottle

Okay, now we can move on to the really fun part of finding the right oils. First of all you should check to make sure the oils aren't stored in clear glass bottles. Essential oils should ideally be kept either in amber colored or cobalt blue colored glass bottles. Stoppers shouldn't have rubber droppers in them either as the oils can deteriorate the rubber. For storage purposes oils should be kept in a cool dark place as well, so storing them on your windowsill is just not an option! These simple rules apply to all essential oils regardless of whether you're buying the oils pre-blended or preparing them yourself.

One last thing, when you're going shopping for your oils you'll probably become overwhelmed if you try to smell more than 8-10 oils in one go. The oils are potent and after a while they'll all smell the same to you. I recommend that you keep a list of the oils that you think you might like and take a few days to choose them without trying to cram it all into one day so that you finally end up with oils that you like.

Dealing With Anxiety Naturally!!

Here's a small list of oils considered good for treatment of anxiety disorders. Remember that Aromatherapy isn't a replacement for proper medical treatment and shouldn't be taken as such.

- Lavender
- Bergamot
- Frankincense
- Sandalwood
- Clary Sage
- Rose
- Sweet Orange
- Neroli (Orange Blossom)
- Patchouli
- Basil
- Ambrette Seed
- Valerian
- Geranium
- Petit Grain

I've listed only a few of the oils that might be considered good for treating anxiety and if you're truly interested there are books and articles that you can research to find out more about Aromatherapy.

To start you out if you want to blend your own oils I've listed a few recipes that might be of use. Blend the oils together first before mixing with a carrier oil if needed. Oils shouldn't be applied directly to the skin as they may be too strong and give a burning sensation.

- 1 part Neroli
1 part Bergamot
1 part Sandalwood

- 1 part Rose
1 part Lavender
1 part Sweet Orange

- 3 parts Lavender
2 parts Frankincense

- 3 parts Bergamot
2 parts Geranium
1 part Petit Grain

Acupuncture

Originating in China Acupuncture rivals Ayurveda in terms of history as both have been in common practice for thousands of years. In terms of popularity both Acupuncture and Ayurveda have only recently been introduced and accepted into western culture. Both treatment methods rely on bringing balance back into your system as a whole, to cure your conditions. Where they differ is in the actual treatment methods.

Where Ayurveda heals you by applying oils and poultices, and use of herbs and teas, Acupuncture involves the delicate art of tapping needles into certain specific pressure points in your body.

I know you're thinking, "Stop the presses!" but it really is a remarkable treatment method. If you have no fear of needles and don't mind trying something new which might actually make your anxiety attacks lessen if not disappear altogether, then trying Acupuncture might be right for you.

Again, for those of you interested in this approach to healing your anxiety let me try and give you a brief overview.

Acupuncture works by balancing the opposing forces of Yin and Yang within us. This is accomplished by inserting thin needles into specific pressure points that can be located along 14 meridians located throughout our body. Vital life force energy, or Chi (Qi), flows through these pathways and when a person is ill a blockage occurs and needs to be cleared. This is the purpose of tapping the needles into you.

For a full cure to be had from Acupuncture you will probably need to have more than one session. Depending upon the severity of your Chi blockage the sessions can go on for a few days or a few months after which your anxiety shouldn't become a problem anymore.

There are many licensed practitioners in the west now and if you're interested you should see one as soon as possible. An internet search or phone directory search should hopefully yield positive results for you to be able to find an Acupuncture practitioner nearby.

Tai Chi - Qi Gong

Another Chinese practice Tai Chi or Qi Gong is also good for people who suffer from anxiety and works along the same principles as Acupuncture - but without the needles. Although considered a martial art Tai Chi is light on actual vigorous maneuvers and concentrates instead on a series of coordinated movements that helps you to breathe and meditate at the same time.

Tai Chi can be practiced by anyone regardless of age and is of general benefit to your overall well being. There are many classes on Tai Chi and with all the favored publicity and feedback it's been getting there's bound to be a class near you. Although the best way to learn Tai Chi is from an experienced

Dealing With Anxiety Naturally!!

professional there are many books on the subject and it can be self taught. The only drawback is that you won't know for certain whether you're doing it properly or not. If you're agoraphobic though and can't leave the house or you avoid crowded situations then this method of learning Tai Chi might be the best for you, at least until you're confident enough to venture out and join a class.

I would recommend though that if you're going to be starting a course of Tai Chi that you first talk to your doctor or physician to see if there are any underlying health reasons why you shouldn't attempt it, as a certain dexterity is required from you to perform some of the movements.

Learning Tai Chi is simple and can be calming especially if incorporated into your daily routine. Once you get the hang of it you'll be able to do it first thing in the morning bringing balance to your whole day. And the breathing techniques learnt along with it might even come to your aid naturally if you do get an anxiety or panic attack.

Simply, Tai Chi is a series of controlled movements that helps to bring the forces of Yin and Yang within you back into a state of balanced control. The high levels of concentration needed to perform these movements properly will take you into a natural state of meditation. This coupled with the steady regular breathing that's required for this is a natural way to calm and soothe you and bring balance back into your life.

Meditation

If you've read the title of this section - meditation - and are thinking it's probably got something to do with religion all I can say is that you'd be wrong. Although meditation has its religious connotations it need not be solely linked to religion.

With the growing popularity of meditation and its beneficial effects meditation can be performed by anyone anywhere and at anytime they like. There doesn't have to be a set time or place to meditate (although this can be good especially in the beginning when you're still getting the hang of it). And you certainly don't need to join a monastery or even an ashram to enjoy the benefits of meditation.

If you want to learn to meditate there are many paths open to you, from learning on your own to reading meditation books to learning the correct meditation techniques from an experienced practitioner.

Most of these routes can be costly and depending on the book you get or the experience of the practitioner you might not get your full money's worth. Amongst the more costly practitioners you'll find centers for meditation that are at a more reasonable price as well. And although the simplest and most cost effective way is to just close your eyes where you are and concentrate on your breathing, to begin with this isn't always the best method as you might not be doing it properly thereby gaining no benefits from your meditation.

Dealing With Anxiety Naturally!!

Whatever course you decide to take you should be prepared for the path that your meditation will take you through. Most things in life aren't simple and you probably know that by now, so if you want to meditate but suffer from anxiety or panic attacks then your mind is probably like a whirling dervish most of the time. And if you try to meditate when you're in this frame of mind it can become even more stressful and frustrating.

What do I mean by that? Well, what most books or self-help meditation guides might not tell you is that the first time you close your eyes and start to meditate, your mind will take on a life of its own and will do anything but concentrate. You could be alone in a quiet little room with no distractions to sidetrack you but you'll still find your mind wandering down odd paths and byways that you didn't even know about!

So when you start meditating for the first time don't be disappointed or frustrated if you find yourself unable to concentrate. It took you a lifetime to get your mind into this state of perpetual disorder and it'll take more than two minutes with your eyes closed in a quiet place to bring it to heel.

It's always a good idea to start with a small, reasonable goal of about 2-3 minutes for your first few sessions of meditation and build up from there. Lay the groundwork as it were for you to be able to achieve a greater chance of success later on.

If you're trying this on your own then the breathing technique that I've mentioned in one of the previous sections "Breathing Properly" is a good place to start. There I've given you the basics for proper breathing. What you'll need to start your meditation is a quiet and comfortable place where you feel at ease and where no one's likely to disturb you. If you have kids then a natural time to try out your meditation would be when they're at school. If you go to work then try this early in the morning (I've found it's the best time for meditation anyway) or late at night after everyone else has gone to sleep and all the work is done.

That's the first step - finding a proper place and time for you to meditate. Next you'll need to find a comfortable spot. I personally prefer the floor propped up against something like the couch, but you could try somewhere simpler like the sitting on the couch itself instead of on the floor or perhaps even leaning against your headboard of your bed with your feet outstretched. Note that I never once mentioned that you need to get yourself into an uncomfortable position like a Yogi does, it's just not realistic since you'll be concentrating more on your discomforts in this position than on your meditation. So like I said, I like the floor but only if it's not too cold and only if there's room for me to maneuver my legs into a comfortable position. Your comfort is the key here, but make sure you're not so comfortable that you'll fall asleep!

Die hard enthusiasts of meditation might look frowningly down upon this practice of meditation but remember that you're here to reap the benefits of meditation not to win their approval. And anything that gets in your way of successfully meditating is simply not going to cut it.

So, now that we've gotten the place and the comfortable position (don't forget to switch off your phones or at least put them where you won't be disturbed), we can now begin to meditate. Some people prefer to have a meditation aid

Dealing With Anxiety Naturally!!

to help them and this can take the form of many things, from a lit candle to a soothing tape to the sound of continuously running water in the background.

For myself I only find these aids a distraction and dispense with them entirely. I'm now confident enough of my ability that all I need is a calm and quiet little oasis. If you find that any of these items works for you though I'd suggest using them.

- Now that you're finally ready to begin, sit back comfortably and close your eyes. Place your hand on your stomach and feel your breathing. Your stomach should be rising up, and down. Up, and down. Inhale, Exhale. Inhale, Exhale
- If you can manage it center your attention on the point just below your nose where your breath comes into your body and where your breath leaves your body. Inhale, Exhale
- You can feel your mind wandering - don't worry, give it a loose leash and slowly bring it back to that one point. Inhale, Exhale. Inhale, Exhale
- Continue with this until you feel you're ready to open your eyes. At that point just sit back and let the feelings of calm wash over you as you soak in all the positive energy flowing through your mind. You're now ready to face whatever problems the rest of the day will bring

To have a continuous positive response meditation should be continued over a period of time. Pretty soon without your even realizing it the time you set aside for your meditation will be one that you look forward to with great enthusiasm.

Yoga

Going as far back as 5,000 years ago Yoga is an ancient and timeless tradition enduring through the centuries as only a few things have done. Yoga is known primarily in the west for its healing and regenerative properties of the mind and body and started life in ancient India as a way for the dedicated follower to attain the highest form of enlightenment. In India this original practice of Yoga still continues much as it did 5,000 years ago with perhaps only a few changes.

The branches of Yoga that came over to the west were later modified to suit the western culture straying away from any overt religious teachings. Some of the ideas that are inherent in the original Yoga practices however are still to be found in the modern day western Yoga practices. This involves nothing more complicated than teaching a state of mindfulness and wellbeing to the student of Yoga to help them in understanding the underlying concept behind each posture or "asana" as it is called. You will also find that Hatha Yoga is the more predominant form of Yoga that is practiced here. Hatha Yoga leans more towards the physical aspect of Yoga and has more to do with poses and postural sequences than do any of the other branches of Yoga.

Dealing With Anxiety Naturally!!

If you're interested in trying Yoga for yourself as a way to defeat your anxiety attacks don't be put off by what you might perceive as religious teachings. This is simply not the case especially if you're joining a class that's held at your local gym. Along with the stress releasing postures and mind relaxing techniques you'll also get an insight into the reason behind each posture and gradually be able to find the postures that suit you and that are able to relieve your anxiety.

As with all things these days, if you want to learn something it's as easy as picking up your phone or buying a how-to book, or even just walking into your gym and making enquiries. If you're able to cope with it I would suggest the gym method as it will get you on the right path from the get go. With the self teaching method you're prone to learn more of the wrong usage of techniques but if you're unable to leave the house or don't like crowds then this is a good way to start.

You also need to be aware that some more advanced postures should only be attempted when an experienced Yoga practitioner is present to help you. Some of the postures are also not recommended if you're suffering from certain ailments such as backache or even knee pain. These can be corrected through Yoga but only by doing the postures that are right for that condition as otherwise you might make it worse.

Yoga is a healthy and natural way to get rid of all your pent up stress and anxiety and will help to bring balance back into your world. As with any new thing however it will take time and practice before you get it right but if you persevere and continue I must say that the benefits to be had from practicing Yoga far outweigh any initial frustration you may have.

For me Yoga vies for pride of place alongside Tai Chi and meditation as my relaxation method of choice first thing in the morning. I found that where before I was always late to get up and just never had that zest for life to help get me through the day, when I took up Yoga I was filled with exuberance and the feeling that I could conquer the world if I wanted to. Yoga was one of the very first things I took up in my quest to fight my frustrating anxiety attacks.

So just to start you off so that you know what your instructor is talking about when he/she starts you off on a Yoga jaunt I've named a few of the postures used commonly to treat anxiety disorders.

- One of the simplest postures and one that is akin to meditation is the Savasana (Corpse Pose) - so named for the fact that you'll be lying flat and prone on whatever comfortable surface you have, ideally the floor, and practicing your breathing technique which I mentioned in both the "Breathing Properly" section and the "Meditation" section
- Padmasana (the Lotus Pose) - calms the brain; and is also one of those poses that I mentioned that needs an experienced Yoga practitioner to help you with. Although it looks simple enough it's really quite difficult to manage this one properly without some intensive practice. (I'm still working on it!)
- Anjali Mudra (Salutation Seal) - reduces stress and anxiety

Dealing With Anxiety Naturally!!

- Janu Sirsasana (Head-to-Knee pose) - relieves mild depression, calms the brain, and also said to relieve anxiety
- Uttanasana (Standing Forward Bend) - calms the mind relieves stress and mild depression and also reduces anxiety and fatigue

Gemstone Therapy

The use of Gemstone therapy for curing ailments isn't a new one and spans the globe and the centuries, from ancient Chinese medicines to Native American Shamanism to Ayurvedic treatments. Gemstone therapy has been around for longer than we can imagine. Earlier used as elixirs in the 13th and 14th centuries, where the gemstone was crushed into a fine powder and mixed with water, that particular branch of the therapy soon died out as popularity waned for it. Not too many people could afford the daily costs of drinking gemstone elixirs.

The present day gemstone therapy though doesn't deal in elixirs and staged a come back in the early 1960's to 1970's. Although popularity for this therapy hasn't been as prolific as it could've be it never truly died out and as of late it has been gaining in recognition as a viable therapy amongst many people.

I realize that about now you're probably wondering whether I've lost it or not, but I promise you that I haven't and if you bear with me for a few more minutes hopefully I can shed some light onto how Gemstone Therapy works.

The therapy is said to work by balancing certain points within you thereby balancing your bodily well being and promoting good health. Although there are a few different ways to perform this therapy the most favored one seems to be the Chakra method. With this method your body can be brought back into balance utilizing the seven chakra centers which I've listed below with names of colors place in brackets after each chakra and I've explained the reason behind this a little later on.

- The Root Chakra - is located at the base of your spine (Red, can even be Black or Brown)
- The Navel Chakra - can be found just below your navel (Orange)
- The Solar Plexus Chakra - is just below the breastbone (Yellow)
- The Heart Chakra - is to be located in the center of your chest (Green or Pink)
- The Throat Chakra - is at the base of your throat (Light Blue)
- The Third Eye Chakra - can be located between your eyebrows (Indigo)
- The Crown Chakra - is at the top of your head (Violet or White)

By placing a specific gem or gems in a certain sequence on your seven chakra points your body can be brought back into proper balance. Which gem you chose and where it goes, depends partly on your ailment and partly on which color category it belongs to. The colors placed within the brackets at

Dealing With Anxiety Naturally!!

the end of each of the seven chakra points, is there to indicate which color corresponds to which chakra.

However, if you're thinking of trying this therapy, don't rush out and buy the nearest gemstone that matches a color that you think might be right for curing anxiety and use it on yourself. Different gems will be used to treat different conditions and what might work for curing anxiety or panic might not work in the curing of insomnia. Also another thing that you might want to think about is whether you want to treat yourself or get an experienced practitioner to treat you. Either way though there are some things that you will need to be aware of first.

If you're treating yourself or even going to someone, you need to make sure that the gemstones used in the therapy are the real thing, as synthetic man made gems won't be able to help you in the same way. Also if you're going to someone else who can perform this therapy make certain the person is legitimate beforehand. Like I said earlier there are many people out there who're just waiting to relieve you of your hard earned money. Unfortunately these people are also to be found alongside the more genuine practitioners so you'll have your job cut out for you in finding the right gemstone therapist for you.

Since we've covered the main necessary ideas involved in Gemstone Therapy, I've listed below a few gemstones that are good for curing anxiety and panic. These are only a few of the possible gemstones and you can be assured that there will be more.

- Rhodochrosite - helps release emotional stresses
- Poppy Jasper - gain a positive outlook
- Lapis - releases tension
- Lapis Lazuli - balances the mind
- Rhodonite - stabilizes your emotions
- Aventurine - releases anxiety
- Moonstone - relieves anxiety
- Amethyst - heals the mind and aids in meditation
- Jade - helps you relax
- Kunzite - gives emotional support
- Malachite - brings harmony into your life
- Rose Quartz - will give you emotional balance
- Tree Agate - helps you to view yourself with clarity
- Amber - lifts emotional burdens
- Coral - enhances your emotional balance

Reiki

Like many alternative treatments Reiki is fairly new on the western front but is gaining in popularity due to the number of people who're trying to get away from the use of drugs to control their conditions. These days, people are looking more and more for methods that will either cure or prevent their ailments rather than merely controlling them alone as is what tends to happen with prescription drugs.

For the purposes of Reiki, first I'll give you a little background on the subject to see if you want to proceed any further.

Unlike counterpart alternative treatment methods such as Ayurveda and Acupuncture, the history of Reiki only dates back to the early 20th century when Mikao Usui developed the practice. Reiki gained a following however and moved across the globe to America where it's now more popular there than in Japan, its birth country.

The word Reiki is derived from the Japanese pronunciation of two Chinese characters "Rei" meaning soul, or spirit, and "Ki" meaning life force or life energy. If you read the section on Acupuncture you'll recognize the Ki as Qi or Chi. In this context they all convey the same idea of life force energy.

Reiki healing has sometimes been compared to the "Laying on of hands" method of healing. This method, the hands method that is, is infinitely religious whereas as the Reiki method isn't religious. Although Mikao Usui did gain the ability to "heal without energy depletion" after fasting and meditating for three weeks on Mount Kurama in Japan, Reiki healing isn't dependent on religious belief to cure. More a belief in the cure and the treatment method are what's needed and that could really be said of just about any line of treatment even western medicine. If you don't trust and believe in your practitioner you're less likely to take heed of any advice or even treatment that is offered to you.

How Reiki works though isn't by using traditional methods such as sticking needles into you or giving you nasty smelling potions to drink. Reiki works by drawing energy into the practitioner, flowing through specific chakra's before finally entering the patient via the practitioner's hands.

Reiki energy is thought to be an intelligent energy knowing where to go without being directed. So once the energy has left the practitioner and entered the patient the Reiki energy will go directly to the spot that needs to be healed. If the patient is skeptical or somehow unwilling to accept treatment the Reiki energy won't work. For Reiki to work the patient has to believe 100% that the treatment method is genuine and that it will work. Not too much to ask really.

Relaxation Tapes

You might've heard of them and you might not have heard of them, but relaxation tapes are a firm favorite of some people for curing their anxiety. Just in case you don't know what relaxation tapes are, (I know I didn't),

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they're a recording of someone taking you stage by stage through a pleasant and calming experience which should ultimately relax you.

You're probably wondering why I think these tapes will work where other similar methods haven't. After all you've already tried so many methods and shelled out so much money on them why should you do the same for these? Does it really work? Will it help you?

Only you can answer most of those questions for yourself. Any treatment or remedy will only work 100% if you're also committed to it and you believe in it to a certain extent. So, why am I writing about what can seem like a big hoax? For the simple reason that it works and it worked for me. I'm not trying to sell you a relaxation tape or tell you that you should buy a tape. I'm merely telling you that I've tried out these tapes and at first it really didn't work for me. I was skeptic and I knew that it wasn't going to work with me. Nothing else had that I had bought before had worked and all I was doing was spending money like water. I knew it had to stop but I succumbed anyway and bought a tape.

It transpired that the very next day these relaxation tapes were the very thing my therapist recommended to me! So deciding that there had to be something in it I tried it out. I was pleasantly surprised and found that if I listened closely enough this could become like a meditation aid for me. That's not what I wanted however, I didn't like meditation aids and I found myself fidgeting after a while despite the soothing overtones.

I talked it over with my therapist the next day and we both agreed to let the relaxation tapes go the way of the dinosaur, but I found myself drawn to it like a magnet as the day wore on and finally unable to help myself I tried it again. This time I decided to give it a fair shot and gamely laid myself out in my favorite easy chair after closing the window blinds to block out the intrusive daylight.

What happened next changed me into a fan of relaxation tapes. I found myself easing further back into my chair discarding all my worries and stresses and listening with intent to the soothing voice on the other side of the tape.

If you're interested in finding a relaxation tape to suit you – they come in CD's too – there are a few places you can try. The internet is one obvious option, along with your doctor or therapist who can recommend one to you. You can also try your local bookstore as they might keep some in stock or perhaps even a friend or family member who's going through the same things as you are, or who just uses the tape to relax. Try one, it doesn't hurt and they're not all that expensive.

Hobbies

As an alternative to taking medications, going for therapy or trying one of the many natural remedies that I've mentioned, there is another way that you can cure or learn to cope with your anxiety. And that's through hobbies. Taking up a hobby that will take your mind away from your incipient anxiety attacks is a great way to deal with it.

Dealing With Anxiety Naturally!!

Naturally if you're disposed towards having a fear of needles I wouldn't recommend you take up sewing, and the same applies for any hobby that you're thinking of doing. If it causes you anxiety or brings on a sense of panic don't take it up.

There are many hobbies that you can get into that will ease your mind, and the ones I've mentioned below are a few that I've taken up over the years and which give me great pleasure. This doesn't mean that I've continued slavishly at these hobbies, on the contrary I've tried them, found out if I liked them and then continued with them until such natural time as I wanted to get my hands into a new hobby.

So if you take up "hobbying" to pass the time of day (and your anxiety) don't think that you have to stick to one hobby. Experiment a little and find one or two that works for you, and perhaps come back to the others at a later date when you're ready for it.

- Gardening
- Exercise
- Art
- Music
- Dance
- Handicrafts

Basically though, you can take up any hobby that will take your mind off your panic attacks or anxiety attacks and pull you deep into realms where your mind can function in peace.

Gardening

Gardening is a great way to take your mind off anything and everything and if you don't mind the bugs it just gets better. I minded the bugs but I still persevered and bought myself a pair of gardening gloves to go with all the other equipment I had.

I found gardening to be a peaceful and soothing experience which also gave me intense satisfaction. It might sound hard to believe but the physical activity associated with gardening can bring a satisfied smile to your lips after a long tiring day spent pottering about your garden. I know that I was always pleasantly surprised by the aches and pains that I seemed to accumulate but which were never much of a problem.

That's probably because it really is true that an "honest day's work" is extremely satisfying especially if you normally spend your time cooped up indoors seated in front of a computer screen. I always try and get outdoors when I can but I had never tried my hand at gardening (all the bugs you see) until my therapist suggested I take it up as a hobby to help me through my difficult times.

Dealing With Anxiety Naturally!!

To be honest the garden never looked so good as it did in those days and although I try to get out there more often now I just can't seem to find the time. I'll never forget though that gardening brought calm to my world just when I needed it the most.

Exercise

Now this is one hobby that although I loved I just couldn't get myself into, at least not in the beginning. The physical workout was great and afterwards I always felt contented and happy but no matter how hard I tried I just couldn't drag myself down to the gym on a regular basis.

I love walking though so I tried that and although it worked for a few weeks it too petered out as my choice of exercise. I could go through the vast list of exercise ideas that I tried and discarded but to make life easier let's just say that exercise and me weren't compatible. That is, until I found my way to Yoga and Tai Chi!

These are not only of value as natural anxiety remedies but they're also forms of – exercise! I had found the right combination and I was happy with it. In fact this hobby of mine seems to be faring better than gardening did.

Art

Art as a hobby can prove to be very therapeutic to you and can bring your mind to a feeling of well being and peace. It didn't agree with me though since I don't seem to have an artistic bone in my body! I tried, and failed miserably, at the following types of art,

- Painting
- Sketching
- Water color painting
- Sculpting

Don't be put off by my failures though. There's a good chance that you'll not find another such un-artistic person as me for a long time so you just take confidence in your skills and go out there and try your hand at whatever kind of art you're interested in! Who knows you could turn out to be the next Monet or Picasso.

Music

Music was one of my favorite attempts at "hobbying" and although I have a tin ear to go along with my abysmal drawing skills I still love music in all its shapes and forms. So although I didn't try my hand at playing the piano or guitar (I did think about drums though, even I should be able to get that one right or so I thought!), I did get all my store-bought music into order so that I

Dealing With Anxiety Naturally!!

could listen to any song that I liked as the mood hit me. This was also good in that by organizing my music, whenever I felt a panic attack coming on I would just need to insert into my CD player the appropriately calming music that I had set aside for just such an occasion.

Dance

Dance was another hobby that I enjoyed thoroughly and one that I wasn't bad at either. It turns out that despite my tin ear and inability to draw I could actually hold a rhythm with my body.

I'm not talking about the head pounding, ear drum crashing, wildly gyrating dancing that seems to be popular today. I'm talking about the more classical styles of Ballroom and Latin American dancing. When I finally found the courage to let go of some of my inhibitions I found that I was enjoying myself and that I really could dance! There's nothing to beat that feeling of exuberant joy that you get when you're dancing. You should try it yourself!

Handicrafts

Handicrafts can encompass just about anything that you can think of that involves usage of your hands and creative skills. To show you what I mean here's a list of various handicrafts that I've tried out,

- Sewing
- Cross-stitching
- Jewelry making
- Candle making
- Card making
- Knitting

Of these not all of them worked for me, like for instance knitting. I could never keep proper track of what I was doing and constantly dropped stitches! This is not good if you actually want to get anything done with knitting.

Then again I found that I liked cross stitching and sewing since the added attention to detail was just what I needed and my mind didn't tend to wander as much as it did with knitting!

If you get frustrated easily then jewelry making is not the hobby for you as it involves intricate work combined with tiny beads that will scatter at the drop of a hat. This I definitely didn't like since I seemed to spend most of my time under tables trying to chase down my beads!

As for making cards and candles I unfortunately found out that my soul craved a little bit more excitement. Only "unfortunately" because by the time I found this out, I'd already bought all the necessary items to do these things!

Dealing With Anxiety Naturally!!

Again let me just reiterate that it's best if you don't take up a hobby that could contribute to your anxiety or your panic attacks. Doing things that frustrate you or alternately just brings on feelings of terror and insecurity should be avoided at all costs. The goal here is to take your mind off your anxiety, not to bring it on full steam ahead.

Bach Flower Remedies

With literally hundreds of practitioners around the world you'll have no shortage of experienced and qualified people who can help you with the Bach Flower Remedy treatment method. If you're a skeptic this might be naturally hard for you to take in but it's a tried and tested method that a lot of people swear by.

Founded by Dr. Edward Bach in the early 1930's the Bach Flower Remedies work by using tinctures or plant infusions, to heal a person's emotional and bodily well being. With a primary number of 38 flower essence therapies to its name probably the most famous one to date is the "Rescue Remedy" which is a pre-blended option of five different flower remedies which you can buy and is said to be useful for any emergency.

The remedies are still prepared in the same original method as Bach did and according to his extensive notes, although with the rapid spread of the Flower Remedy treatment around the world new methods have also cropped up. Most of these however adhere to Bach's original principles that the cure should be healing for the mind not the body as this was where all conditions started. In effect he asserted that harmful emotions were the cause for disease in people and his treatment methods addressed this factor. That one statement alone I'm afraid put him at immediate odds with the rest of medicinal science who don't even consider Bach Flower remedies to be of much import.

For the person suffering from anxiety and depression however any cure is a viable one if nothing has worked before it. Before trying any of these medications however I would consult your doctor to see if there might be possible side effects from these treatments especially if you're taking other medications as well.

Since each of the 38 flower remedies that Bach discovered has a corresponding harmful emotional feeling associated with it and since each of these imbalances can in turn be cured by one or a combination of the 38 flower remedies many ailments can be cured simply by using the prescribed treatment.

The remedies are produced using Bach's two methods where the first method is called the "Sun method" and the second one is called the "Cooking Method". The Sun method prescribes plucking the flowers on a bright sunny day and placing them in a glass bowl full of fresh spring water. The bowl of water logged flowers is then left in the sunshine for about two to four hours before the flowers are removed and the water preserved. An equal part of alcohol is added to the water to better aid in the preservation process and the solution is then stored away until such time as it's needed. At this time the

Dealing With Anxiety Naturally!!

remedy is again diluted with water and prescribed the needful amount to the patient.

The second method, the Cooking Method was used to accommodate such unchangeable factors as winter where the ability to use the Sun method was all but impossible. Here the flowers and buds of the necessary plants were plucked accordingly with the sun method but boiled down instead of left to infuse the water naturally. After numerous times filtering the liquid, alcohol would be added to the preparation to preserve its properties.

Of the 38 original Bach Flower Remedies the following are supposed to aid in curing anxiety,

- Cherry Plum - used for people who believe themselves to be losing their mental hold on life
- Gorse - for hopelessness and despair
- Honeysuckle - to soothe anxiety over events that have already occurred and over which you had no control
- Larch - for a lack of confidence within oneself
- Red Chestnut - especially good if you suffer from GAD as this remedy works to bring back into balance an over concern for well being of family and friends
- Olive - relieves mental fatigue
- Rock Rose - helps you with feelings of terror

I've only mentioned a few of the remedies that might be suitable to cure your anxiety. Of the 38 there may be more than I've listed here, or alternately an experienced Bach Flower remedy practitioner might tell you that what I've listed isn't exactly right. The only way you'll know for certain though is if you contact the proper Bach Flower Remedy practitioners and put your case before them. A quick internet search can help you to locate a practitioner near to where you live or might even yield a phone number.

Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT)

Emotional Freedom Techniques or EFT for short isn't so much a new method of treatment as it is a different form of Acupressure. Basically EFT is Acupuncture without the needles and is a mixture of traditional Acupuncture and the study and principles of human movement. Let me just go off on a side line and mention that Acupressure is similar to Acupuncture but instead of placing needles in your pressure points you instead massage these points.

EFT works by concentrating only on a few of these pressure points and by tapping the points instead of massaging them. So you will in effect be tapping gently on a series of specific points allowing any energy blockages along the meridians to be cleared away. EFT can be performed by yourself once you learn how and is a simple uncomplicated technique. Also since the points are located on your face and upper torso for the most part, it becomes easy for

Dealing With Anxiety Naturally!!

you to do anywhere and at anytime making it one of the more accessible methods for treating anxiety. Although I didn't find the benefits of EFT to be outweigh yoga or meditation, or even therapy in my mind, I have no doubt that for some people this could be just the thing they need to help them overcome their anxiety disorders.

If you want to learn EFT you can either go to the official EFT website run by its founder Gary Craig, or you could try any of the other numerous websites that will offer you guidance. Typing in "Emotional Freedom Techniques", into a search engine will yield results that you can explore.

Please remember that before starting any such treatments you should consult a qualified medical practitioner consult and or therapist.

Psychotherapy

When you hear the word Psychotherapy in reference to anxiety cures you might become anxious or alarmed. What will the neighbors, your family, or your friends think when you admit that you're going for psychotherapy? The first thing you should do is to not panic or become overly anxious if these thoughts come crashing down around you the minute you make that first appointment.

It doesn't matter what anyone thinks or says. This might be hard to accept now but you will be glad in the long run that you did so. To even come to the point where you're able to accept help or even admit your problem to someone else is a big deal. It's a hard and difficult road you've traveled to get to this point in your life and don't let anyone else take it away from you or belittle you.

I know that for myself the feeling of relief was tremendous when I made my first therapy appointment. I had finally told someone that I needed help but then doubts began to assail me. Had I done the right thing? Would this total stranger whom I had perhaps spoken with for about two minutes on the phone be able to help me? Would they instead be unfeeling and uninterested in my paltry little problems?

The doubts just kept coming and kept getting stronger until in the end I didn't actually go for my appointment. I made up some plausible excuse to stay away and kept doing the same thing in my mind again and again for the next few months.

I can't tell you exactly what it was that changed my mind or exactly when. I just know that I found my self again making an appointment for a therapy session but this time I was ready. I just sat back and waited for the doubts to come creeping up to me.

Like last time I hadn't long to wait, but this time I was better prepared, I had fortified myself to stand strong against the doubts. Naturally it wasn't that easy. As the time for my appointment drew nearer I found myself becoming subjected to increased amounts of anxiety and once again nearly excused myself from it.

Dealing With Anxiety Naturally!!

To this day I don't know why I went but I'm just grateful that I did. What psychotherapy did to help me in those beginning stages, I was unable to find in prescription drugs or even from meditation. They all in their own way helped but they never made me realize exactly how to deal with my problem. I've stopped my psychotherapy sessions now and instead use the other natural methods I've found to be helpful to control my emotions and to find peace within me but I'll always be grateful to the fact that I had therapy to help me get over my problem.

So what exactly is psychotherapy and how does it work? First off let me get started by telling you how it doesn't work. A good psychotherapist doesn't feed you advice - he lets you come at it at your own pace. He doesn't tell you what you're doing right or what you're doing wrong. Your psychotherapist won't tell you that your problem stems from such and such a reason and they won't say "Do this, it'll make you feel better and will also cure your anxiety".

Instead the goal in psychotherapy is to get you to recognize and face your greatest fears for yourself. Basically to find the reasons behind why you react the way you do when you suffer from anxiety disorders. This doesn't mean placing the blame squarely on any one person or any one event in your life that might have triggered your symptoms to begin with. What this entails instead is an intensely personal experience whereby you face yourself and what makes you tick. And this might be the hardest part of all. For most people it's much easier on an emotional level to stay detached from the feelings and emotions that are causing you so much grief than to face up to them.

As an example, it's like when something goes wrong and you wallow in self pity. It feels good to think that no one cares, that you're the only person in the world going through this emotional upheaval and that no one understands you. Hearing it said out loud, it might sound slightly juvenile but when you're in the throes of self pity you don't care. It's just so much easier to think this way than it is to face up to why you feel like this in the first place.

In case you're wondering, yes, this used to be my favorite method of denial and it got to be a pretty vicious cycle sometimes. Denial, self pity, stress, anxiety, depression and denial all over again to start the cycle.

Hopefully I've been able to convey, even if only on a very basic level, how psychotherapy works, and doesn't work, but you still don't know exactly what psychotherapy is. So again, let me start by telling you what it isn't.

It's not about medications and prescription drugs and it's not about herbs and herbal teas or even about meditation. It's not about the chemical reactions that occur in your brain that might be contributing to your distress and it's not about finding that elusive state of a higher mind set. Psychotherapy is all about you. Focusing on your life, on your fears, on your likes and dislikes, but mostly about focusing on therapeutic ways and means that can help you come to terms with yourself.

In the pursuance of curing my anxiety I came across these particular psychotherapies some of which I found to be helpful to me and about which I will go into detail further on.

- Behavioral Therapy

Dealing With Anxiety Naturally!!

- Cognitive Therapy
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
- Psychoanalytic Therapy
- Hypnosis

Before we go into any details on these however I'd like to take you on a small detour that will help you in choosing the right psychotherapist.

Choosing a Therapist - What you need to know

When choosing a therapist for the first time, there are a few things that you should find out first. If the therapist was recommended to you by your doctor then chances are good that the therapist is genuine and can help you. If you come by your therapist in any other way though you should always check to make sure that they are who they say they are. So,

- Always check credentials especially if you have any doubts on that score, anyone can claim to be a doctor, it just doesn't necessarily follow that they're a real qualified psychotherapist
- Make sure that your therapist has prior working knowledge about your disorder and can indeed help you
- Go for one session if you like and find out if you're comfortable dealing with the therapist, you'll need to interact with them on a very personal level and this could become a problem if you're not comfortable with them

On how to actually go about finding a therapist, you have several options open to you. You could get a referral from your doctor or from friends. Either of these sources are good as they come from trusted and sometimes personal experience. If neither of these options are viable for you there's always internet databases available for you to choose from, or alternately you could just stick a pin in the yellow pages and go with whichever name comes up. Any or all of these methods work and remember that you always have the option of finding a different therapist. The option is always yours so don't become too intimidated to walk away from your therapist.

I was lucky in that I found that I could connect on an emotional level with my therapist almost from the start. You'll find that this is also another important factor and one that you shouldn't shy away from if you want to get cured. You'll have to have complete trust in your therapist before you can progress forward in your therapy.

Please keep in mind that all therapy should be conducted by a trained and certified therapist.

Behavioral Therapy

If you read my list of therapies, you might even now be scratching your head in confusion. Aren't the first three therapies basically alike? I know it might seem that way now but they're not. I won't try to explain each therapy right now but will instead go into greater detail in each section. So for this section we'll look at Behavioral therapy and what it can do for you.

By undergoing behavioral therapy you'll be trying to control your reactions to a given situation. Generally this situation will try to mimic one which triggers your anxiety attacks. Don't be worried though, you won't be put into this situation your first time at bat. Your therapist will work with you and build you up to the point where you'll at least be able to attempt defeating your fears with physical action and no I don't mean karate chopping or anything like that.

What you will be prompted to do in Behavioral therapy will be to relearn all of your reactions and responses that you've honed over your lifetime when facing any given situation. Basically Behavioral therapy believes that if you can control your behavior, or your reactions, you can change your thought process along with it. When I say "control your behavior" I mean how your body reacts instinctively to any given situation, sometimes without you even realizing it. If we take the ever simple example of a car accident, when your mind recognizes the oncoming danger your body automatically goes into emergency mode. You'll spin the wheel and try to avoid the collision all within the space of a few seconds and all without conscious decision or thought. It's this type of unconscious reactions, which triggers your anxiety that Behavioral therapy will try change so that you'll be able to fight back at the anxiety and panic pushing at you.

So for instance if you're faced with your worst panic inducing fears then you'll be taught to handle it differently. Mind numbing fear might not be your first choice of reaction if you've come to terms within your Behavioral therapy sessions. In which case, you might just be able to relax your tensed muscles and asses the situation first. Is it a threat? Can you be harmed by it? Do you need to run and run fast? These should hopefully be going through your mind instead of thoughts of mind numbing terror, after successfully completing your Behavioral therapy.

Cognitive Therapy

So then, "What's Cognitive therapy?" I found myself asking one day of my therapist. At this point I was getting slightly confused. Cognitive therapy it turns out is almost the exact opposite of Behavioral therapy. Whereas in Behavioral therapy you try to change your body's reaction to given situations, Cognitive therapy works on your mind and your emotional responses. So how does that help?

Well as far as I can tell, by changing your emotional responses you can train yourself to basically do the same things that I mentioned in Behavioral therapy. That is, to stand your ground first and assess your situation instead of giving into fear and panic thereby wiping out any control you might have had over the situation.

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This therapy assumes that by changing the way you look at things and your conditioned emotional response to them you can change your negative thoughts and terror stricken unthinking behavioral patterns. If we go back to car accident example, with Cognitive therapy you'll be taught to override all instincts and fears and instead of unthinkingly wrenching the wheel in an attempt to avoid the collision you'll instead be taught how to assess the situation and make a logical choice. So instead of wrenching the wheel to the left to avoid the other car and running over into the next lane you might perhaps be able to take it to the right thereby avoiding anything else in your path and not letting your fear drive you to make an emotional response.

So should you choose Cognitive therapy or Behavioral therapy? Luckily that choice isn't up to us and your therapist will recommend the right course of action for you.

With this therapy too you should be aware that at some point or other your therapist is going to bring you face to face with your anxiety triggers and it could become highly emotional for you. That's why you need to be able to trust and connect with your therapist on a personal level. If you don't trust them the therapy won't work as well.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

If you've just read the title of this section you're probably confused by now. First Behavioral therapy and then Cognitive therapy, now a combination of both! To put it simply and to hopefully stop your confusion, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy or CBT is a combination of both types of therapies and is one that is favored by a lot of psychotherapists in treating anxiety disorders. So what can you expect from CBT? Does it treat your physical responses or your emotional responses?

It does both really. It taps into the grey areas that neither of the other two therapies can do alone. It conditions your responses to change your physical behavior and it also taps into your emotional reserves to help you change your automatic emotional responses. That's why CBT is such a popular therapy. It covers all the bases, not just one.

Also when compared to the other different types of psychotherapy CBT has one of the fastest patient turnarounds with an average number of sessions only lasting perhaps as long as 16 sessions in total. This is the average figure regardless of what problem you're suffering from. Not only are you not kept in sessions for a long period of time, but it also frees you up from a prolonged attachment with your therapist. Don't get me wrong this connection with your therapist is a good thing to have, but some people are prone to become too emotionally dependent upon their therapists to give them all the answers.

What CBT will do for you without a doubt however, is make you see the world around you for what it is. It'll also bring you to a point where you can take your fears out of that dusty cupboard in your mind where you stuffed them into and give it a good shake up. These techniques have been proven time and time again to work, and I'm proof that CBT does work.

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I faced my fears and anxieties and eventually came out the winner although it took a lot of hard work on my part especially to break through my denial barrier. I had held on to my fears and feelings so long that I didn't want to admit to myself just what I was running away from in my mind. I can tell you that some of those sessions were very cathartic and most times at the end of a session I'd be emotionally drained. Don't let that put you off going to a therapist though. It's probably the best method I could recommend to help you get over your anxiety disorder.

Psychoanalytic Therapy

Psychoanalytic therapy isn't one that I've tried before but one of my friend's who's still undergoing treatment says it works for her. In brief I can tell you that psychoanalysis works on a long term basis with your therapist working with you sometimes for years.

What it tries to do slowly is to bring to the forefront of your mind those unconscious memories and thoughts that drive your actions. Something a bit like CBT, where you're forced to confront your fears but it's gentler and less intrusive as it were. You're encouraged to find these thoughts and behavioral patterns for yourself and work out the subtle underlying causes behind these with your therapist.

Sometimes if the underlying causes for your anxiety have been building up over a length of time, a therapy like CBT might not be able to help you. You might need to time and greater attention to sort out each individual thread and come to terms with it before you can think about moving on.

Don't be ashamed if this is the case for you. All people are different and will move forward at their own pace, so don't try to rush through your therapy thinking that you need to finish it off as soon as possible or think that you're progressing too slowly. There's no such thing as too slow when you're having therapy.

Hypnosis

This is one therapy that I like despite the fact that I haven't even tried it. It's the thought of it that brings out all kinds of possibilities in my mind. After watching numerous television shows where they incorporate hypnosis I find myself fascinated by the subject.

I'm happy to say that I'm not the only person with such an interest in hypnosis either. Although not fully accepted until the 1950's-1980's when intense research was conducted on hypnosis, people have been investigating hypnosis for well over 200 years now. Amongst all of these forays into the world of hypnosis what I find so interesting is the fact no one knows the exact science of how hypnosis works or why hypnosis suggestion's works on some people and not on others.

For a quick rundown, scientists theorize that hypnosis works by accessing your subconscious mind. They believe the subconscious mind to be the one

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that's basically running your whole body from behind the scenes. What do I mean by that? Unless you're meditating, or consciously doing the breathing techniques do you ever actually just stop and think that you're breathing, that you'll need to inhale now and exhale almost immediately after that. And that you'll need to do it all over again everyday of your life for as long as you live? What about all those other unconscious little things you do? Can you honestly say that you're aware of every little thing?

What hypnosis attempts the way I see it, is to tap into this subconscious mind and help you overcome your anxiety. Sometimes through taking you to the root of your problem and talking you through it and showing you exactly what you're running from, and sometimes even by placing "suggestive blockages" where you might block out your negative response to your anxiety triggers and instead have a positive response. I'm not sure if this is the way it works exactly and specifically or whether it'll even work for you but I do know that hypnosis is used sometimes to help people treat their anxiety disorders.

If you want to know more on hypnosis and exactly how it works talk it over with your psychotherapist or conduct a little research first by way of books or the internet. These methods can probably give you a far better explanation than I can since I can only offer you theories, most of which aren't mine anyway, since as I keep mentioning, I'm not a doctor or trained medical professional. If you want try to hypnosis to treat your anxiety please try it only with the advice of and with a trained medical professional.

Help and Support

Suffering from anxiety disorders isn't an easy thing, I know from my own frequent panic attacks in the past that these can bring your life to a standstill. You feel isolated and alone, cut off from the people around you as you struggle to find a stable foothold in a world gone suddenly awry. Most times you'll find that you've withdrawn into yourself and find it harder and harder to communicate with anyone. What can you do in these situations then? Is there any help for you? To that question I can answer unequivocally that, yes there's help available for you if you suffer from an anxiety disorder.

You might have only just suffered from your first anxiety attack or you might be a sufferer of long standing, it doesn't matter which. All that really matters is that you need help and you don't know who to turn to. Family and friends might seem like the obvious answer to a lot of people but sometimes that's just not possible. No matter how understanding they are sometimes you just can't bring yourself to confide in someone that close to you or someone who knows you too well. This very closeness bars you from talking freely since you dread hearing what the other person might really be thinking.

This is in effect a self preservation technique but if you don't have someone to talk with you could be leading yourself deeper into emotional trouble. It's just plain unhealthy and you need to realize that. The catharsis of talking through our problems is of great benefit and by hiding away and not confiding in anyone we're allowing our fears to run our minds. Do you remember the bogeyman that used to hide under your bed when you were a child? Or how

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about the ghost that stayed in your closet, or the little gremlin hiding away in the corner? These were all fears that we had as children. Looking back on it now with time and experience, weren't the bogeyman and the ghost and the gremlin larger than life only because as a child you only wanted to hide away from your fears? Didn't they shrink to appropriate size and disappear altogether after you told someone, or even worked it out for yourself as time passed by? What you did to make them disappear was simply to face your fears and discard them. This can also be accomplished by talking to someone, since when you do this you tend to see everything newly and in a different light.

The one treatment I didn't mention earlier was talking. Sometimes just sitting down and talking out your problems can help better than a truckload of medications or a wagonload of treatment methods. Although talking is what you do with your therapist that's also not necessarily what you need. Eventually you'll need to face your fears and problems head on and a therapist is good to help you through this, but sometimes all you really need is a good sound ear that won't prod you or make judgment calls on you or your actions.

So if you can't talk to your family or friends, and you don't feel like visiting a therapist what can you do? Luckily there are a number of crisis centers and help lines available almost 24 hours a day which can provide you with impersonal yet sympathetic listeners whom you can confide in. These came in very handy for me on the occasions where I absolutely could not face going through another panic attack again and I was close to bringing on another attack again by the constant anxiety and depression.

The people are all nice and friendly and you never feel inferior. You also have the added benefit that you don't ever need to face them eye to eye. I know this sounds cold but that's really the reason you're calling them isn't it? There's nothing wrong with not wanting to face the person you're spilling your heart out to and you shouldn't think there is.

Help lines and Forums

I've taken a little time to list below some avenues for you to explore if you need help, or just want to talk.

- National Hopeline Network
Phone number: 1-800-784-2433
Website: <http://hopeline.com/4/map.asp>
- The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
Phone number: 1-800-273-8255
Website: www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org
- www.anxietyzone.com/ is an anxiety forum where you can discuss your problems with other anxiety sufferers
- www.panicsurvivor.com/ is another forum where you can find help
- Check also the medical pages of your phone directory for more crisis hotlines or help centers

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- www.befrienders.org/support/helplines.asp this site will be able to supply you with helpline numbers that you can call

There are a number of other such support groups, help lines and forums available and I've listed only a very few of these above. I'm not recommending that you try any of these and I'm not trying to tell you that they're good. I've merely presented you with a list of possible options that are open to you. Please don't use any of these options if you feel uncomfortable doing so

Remember, you're not alone a lot of people suffer from anxiety disorders.

Hold on and be strong, things will get better
You just need to keep a positive frame of mind.