

Anxiety

Experiencing anxiety, or having feelings of worry, concern or apprehension, is a normal part of being human. While this basic biological response evolved for survival, its action in the modern world can lead some people to distress. To this day, the anxiety response is helpful when there is a need to act quickly in the face of a threat, but sometimes the experience of anxiety is more like an over-protective friend.

The sensations brought on by anxiety are a sign that something is important. The automatic actions of the brain include stimulating the release of adrenaline, which leads to some body systems becoming more active (increased heart rate and breathing, muscles are readied for action), and others becoming less active (digestion slows or stops, decrease in hearing and peripheral vision). These changes in arousal can be counter-productive in a number of contexts. The goal of dealing with anxiety is not to get rid of it, because anxiety is a natural response, but to learn to manage it and live with it.

When you sense that anxiety is getting in the way of doing some of the things you want to or need to do, there are helpful strategies to employ. Below is a list of actions that you can use to help how you feel. Some may require further instruction, so visit your school counsellor to discuss in more detail:

1. **Breathe deeply**: There are a number of different specific strategies to slow the rate of breathing, increase its depth, and to bring more calm and relaxation. Breathe more with action of the belly, inhale and exhale thoroughly, sit up or stand straight. Counting and/or closing your eyes may help.
2. **Employ relaxation strategies**: Among these are **muscle relaxation techniques** or **visualization techniques** that can be easily learned. Muscle relaxation helps the physical body feel more calm, which then affects feelings, while visualization works the opposite way.
3. **Use mindfulness or meditation techniques**: These strategies help you attune to sensations, feelings and thoughts so that they become less distracting or distressing, bringing greater relaxation and reducing worry.
4. **Talk to others**: Talking about your thoughts and feelings often helps. Parents can be helpful when they know about your experiences, including arranging an appointment to see your doctor when things are really bothering you. Talking with teachers might help arrange things differently in class so that you feel more at ease. Your counsellor is available to speak in detail about your experiences, to teach strategies and techniques, and to make referrals. Chatting with your friends can also lead to helpful support and understanding.
5. **Learn to monitor and change self-talk**: Sometimes what we think or say to ourselves can make us feel stressed or anxious. Being aware of this “self-talk” and learning strategies to change it to more realistic and positive messaging will help to change how you feel.

(Continue on the other side for resources)

6. **Consult resources:** There are many sources of information and support to help you feel differently and more in control. Consider contacting any of the following:

i. School Counsellor

ii. Family Doctor

iii. Counsellor/Therapist in the Community – Your school counsellor or family doctor can refer you to someone with whom you can visit regularly in order to learn and practice strategies that will help you manage how you feel.

iv. Doctor, Nurse or Counsellor at the Boulevard Youth Clinic – At the Pacific Spirit Community Health Centre (2110 West 43rd Ave., ph: 604-261-6366), there is a **Drop-in Youth Clinic** Tuesdays 2:30 – 5:00 and Thursdays 3:30 – 6:00

v. Websites and Apps – While information you find on-line can be helpful, it is best used in conjunction with the support you receive directly from the people listed above and from your parents.

- **Anxiety Canada** website (<https://anxietycanada.com/>). There is a specific “youth” tab, and you can access the useful **Mindshift app** on this website.

- The **Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre** (<http://keltymentalhealth.ca/>) is a comprehensive resource, referring to all sorts of mental health matters. Follow the “Resources for Youth” tab for more information. You might find your way to specific information relating to anxiety (<http://keltymentalhealth.ca/mental-health/disorders/anxiety-children-and-youth>). There is a series of podcasts on various topics that may be helpful at <https://keltymentalhealth.ca/podcast>.

- **Foundry** (<https://foundrybc.ca/>) is a comprehensive resource that considers all sorts of matters that affect youth, including anxiety. There is information, self-assessments, tips about self-care, how to get support, including a drop-in centre at 1260 Granville, ph. 604-806-9415.

- **Booster Buddy** is another app designed to help youth improve their mental health through promotion of positive habits. This may be designed more for younger teenagers (<https://www.islandhealth.ca/learn-about-health/children-youth/mental-health-children-youth/boosterbuddy-mobile-app>).

- If you are feeling particularly bothered, want to talk to someone, but there is no one around you are comfortable with at that moment, consider calling the **Kids Help Phone** at 1-800-668-6868 or www.KidsHelpPhone.ca.