



# STRUGGLING WITH ANXIETY AND STRESS: DOS AND DON'TS

## Am I struggling with anxiety?

Common symptoms of experiencing anxiety include nervousness, a sense of panic, an increase in both heart rate and breathing, as well as absolute avoidance of stressful situations. These can manifest in the form of loss of interest in your favorite activities, feeling isolated, disruption in sleep patterns, feeling emotionally withdrawn, as well as thoughts of self-harm or suicide. However, mental health issues such as stress and anxiety are not limited to just these symptoms. In the case that you feel overwhelmed by signs and symptoms of anxiety, you can certainly talk to friends, relatives, or someone you trust as well as possibly seek professional help.



## What are ways I can improve my mental health?

While there might not be one consistent way to improve your mental health for everyone there are a variety of strategies to support your overall well-being which include: seeking support from friends, family, or professional help and practicing self-appreciation to help create a positive mindset. Additional activities you might want to keep in mind include exercising regularly, maintaining a healthy diet, as well as practicing relaxation through breathing exercises or engaging in hobbies.

## How can I better relieve the stress and anxiety I feel when thinking about my future?

When considering your future goals and aspirations, it is easy to feel overwhelmed by the many directions life can take you. To best manage stress and anxiety it might be better to focus on daily goals and experiences that life provides you with and build a sense of appreciation for how far you have come. Additionally, by simply keeping a positive mindset about the future, stress may settle as you try to imagine the future accomplishments you'll achieve. When things get stressful, it is okay to take the backseat in life and admire all that you have already accomplished. Expressing yourself is essential during this time. Things you may want to pick up include journaling or making a mood board of your wants and goals for the future as well as sharing your feelings with others.



## What are everyday things I can do to relieve stress?

Implementing everyday stress-relieving tasks can be essential to slowly improving your mental health. Such tasks include:

- Connecting and interacting with others to feel a part of a bigger collective.
- Spending time with family and friends
- Enjoying a local gathering
- Planning activities such as trips to a local park or lake
- Engaging in interests such as watching movies and shows or playing sports.
- Joining a club or a group with fun activities
- Physical activities including sports, yoga, and swimming

Expressing yourself is another key element to stress relief and involves ideas such as:

- Writing in journals
- Listening to music or podcasts
- Expressing boundaries with others.
- Music and creative arts like painting, pottery and stitching/embroidery



## Are setbacks normal when trying to develop a healthier lifestyle?

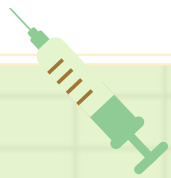
Setbacks or falling back on your newly established principles and motivations are normal to encounter on your journey to mental health recovery.

However, setbacks should not define your journey as you can pull through the difficulties and establish a sense of resiliency which can further motivate you to push forward. Often setbacks allow reflection and as a result, provide opportunities to learn and adapt. While it may be easier to feel discouraged, setbacks are consistently involved in mental health journeys, you are not alone.



## What should I not do when attempting to deal with stress and anxiety?

Feeling stressed and anxious can lead to a lot of confusion and may further motivate you to isolate yourself, however, there are specific risky behaviors that you should look out for. Neglecting your personal feelings and not allowing yourself to be open to the idea of help from both loved ones and professionals is never a good idea. Neglecting help from others can further feelings of despair or frustration as you may eventually feel as if you are tackling issues by yourself. Additionally, allowing negative comparisons between yourself and others can lead to you thinking less of yourself which can make you feel that you do not deserve support. Another risk factor is trying to use unapproved medications or drugs as a form of self-treatment, as this can lead to health risks such as over-reliance on drug use for escapism.



## How do I bring up mental health conversations with family and friends who might not understand?

Discussing your issues and feelings relating to stress is not always easily understood by family or friends, however, discussing the topic often and looking for someone to listen to your thoughts is important. Open conversations are highly encouraged as they may lessen the burden of carrying your emotions and feelings by yourself. If you find difficulty in conversing with loved ones, involving professional counsellors is a great alternative as they can act as a voice for you and explain your condition to others. Speaking with a support group and involving family members and friends in these conversations is another useful option to build a sense of understanding and a way to progress forward between you and your loved ones.

