



Understanding Anxiety and Depression:

A Comprehensive Guide for Individuals and Families





Everyone deserves a meaningful and fulfilling life with not only their physical health needs met, but also their behavioral health needs. Because no two people are exactly alike, behavioral health services must meet each person's specific, individual needs to be effective.

Comprehensive behavioral health draws on a wide range of therapies, interventions, and support systems to provide thorough assessment, diagnosis, treatment, prevention, and follow-up care.

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Introduction

If you or a loved one feels anxious or depressed, the first thing you should know is:

You are not alone.

Anxiety and depression are two of the most common mental health disorders in the world.

The [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) estimates that 4% of the global population experiences an anxiety disorder. In the United States, anxiety disorders are the most common mental health concern. More than 40 million U.S. adults have an anxiety disorder, and 7% of children (ages 3-17) experience anxiety issues annually, according to the [National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#).

Similarly, the WHO estimates that [3.8% of the global population](#) experience depression. In the U.S., 17.8% of adults had or were being treated for depression in 2023, and 29% reported having been diagnosed with depression at some point in their lifetime—[record high levels](#) in both cases. Approximately 4.4% of U.S. children have ever had a diagnosis of depression, [according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#).

The second thing you should know is:

There is help.

Seeking help from mental health professionals is critical. Treatment options can include therapy, medication, lifestyle changes, and support from friends and family.

We at [The Center for Behavioral Health at Woods](#) want you to have accurate information about these common but often misunderstood and stigmatized disorders. We also want you to know about resources that make help and hope available.

What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is an emotional experience characterized by feelings of unease, worry, and fear.

Although stress and anxiety are related, they aren't the same thing. Stress is the body's response to a potential threat or danger. It increases alertness and heightens arousal. It is often short-term.

In contrast, anxiety is the body's reaction to stress. Excessive or chronic anxiety can be detrimental to our physical and mental well-being, and can significantly interfere with daily living. Persistent anxiety may indicate an anxiety disorder.

What Are Some Symptoms of Anxiety?

Symptoms of anxiety can include:

- feeling restless or "on edge"
- increased irritability
- difficulty focusing or concentrating
- difficulty engaging in social interactions
- excessive worrying
- muscle tension and tightness
- rapid heartbeat
- sweating
- trembling
- shortness of breath
- trouble sleeping or insomnia

Remember, anxiety can manifest differently in each individual, and the severity of these symptoms can vary.

If symptoms persist, interfere with daily life, or cause significant distress, seek professional help for proper diagnosis and treatment.

What is Depression?

Depression is a mental health disorder affecting a person's mood, thoughts, and behavior.

It can have a significant, detrimental impact on daily life and functioning.

Depression is more than simply "feeling down" or "having a bad day." It can last for weeks, months, or even years. It is a real illness no one can simply "snap out of" or overcome by willpower alone.

What Are Some Symptoms of Depression?

Symptoms of depression can include:

- persistent feelings of sadness, emptiness, or hopelessness
- loss of interest or pleasure in previously enjoyable activities
- significant changes in appetite or weight
- changes in sleep patterns
- fatigue and low energy
- difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- thoughts of self-harm, death, or suicide

These symptoms can vary in severity and duration. Not everyone who has depression experiences all these symptoms.

Seeking professional help and support from loved ones is crucial for those experiencing depression so they can find effective treatment and regain a sense of well-being.

What Causes Anxiety and Depression?

A combination of biological, environmental, and psychological factors can cause anxiety and depression. They can affect anyone, regardless of age, gender, or background.

Causes can include:

- **Genetic or biological factors**

Research suggests individuals with a family history of anxiety or depression are more likely to develop these conditions themselves, indicating a genetic component. Certain genetic variations can affect brain chemistry and mood regulation, making some individuals more susceptible to depression and anxiety.

- **Environmental factors**

Such factors as a stressful or chaotic home environment, financial difficulties, or significant life changes or losses can contribute to the development of depression and anxiety. Other environmental factors, such as limited social support, isolation, and discrimination, can also play a role in the onset or worsening of these conditions.

- **Psychological factors**

Individuals with a history of trauma or abuse, low self-esteem, or a tendency towards negative thinking patterns may be more susceptible to anxiety and depression. Additionally, individuals with certain personality traits (for example, perfectionism or repetitive negative thinking) may be more prone to these mental health conditions.

- **Certain medical conditions and medications**

Chronic illnesses, hormonal imbalances, and neurological disorders can all have an impact on mental health. Additionally, some medications, including those used to treat high blood pressure, can have side effects that contribute to these disorders.

- **Substance abuse**

Drug and alcohol abuse disrupts the brain's reward system, leading to chemical imbalances that can affect mood regulation and increase the risk of anxiety and depression. The consequences of substance abuse—relationship problems, financial struggles, legal issues, and more—can further contribute to feelings of stress, guilt, and low self-esteem.

Various combinations of these often complex factors can cause depression and anxiety. Each person's experience is unique.

If you or someone you care about struggles with these conditions, seek support from a mental health professional. Treatment options can help manage symptoms and improve mental health, physical health, and overall well-being.

What Treatment Options for Anxiety and Depression Are Available?

Many effective strategies are available for managing and treating anxiety and depression.

Exact courses of treatment vary depending on the individual's needs, but they generally include some combination of medication, psychotherapy, lifestyle changes, and social support.

- **Medication**

Anti-anxiety medications, antidepressants, and other medications can help reduce symptoms such as low mood, difficulty concentrating, restlessness, and insomnia. A doctor or mental health professional can prescribe medication after assessing the individual's needs and discussing other forms of treatment, such as psychotherapy.

- **Psychotherapy**

Psychotherapy (also known as "talk therapy") can help individuals identify their mental health issues' root causes, and then develop skills and strategies to manage them. It involves talking to a mental health professional such as a psychologist or counselor about thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. This type of therapy can yield valuable insight into how emotions and behaviors are connected and influence each other.

- **Lifestyle Changes**

Making lifestyle changes that lead to long-term better mental health may take time, effort, and perseverance, but it is possible. Changes in such lifestyle areas as diet,

exercise, sleep habits, and social activities can all make a positive difference. Spending more time in nature exposes individuals to natural light and fresh air, and encourages natural "feel good" chemicals that help alleviate symptoms. Also, engaging in such creative activities as art, music, or writing can be therapeutic ways to express emotion.

- **Mindfulness Techniques**

Practicing mindfulness and meditation can help calm the mind and reduce anxiety. Related relaxation techniques such as deep breathing and progressive muscle relaxation can also help to alleviate symptoms of stress and anxiety.

- **Social Support**

When someone is struggling with anxiety or depression, they commonly feel isolated and alone. A network of family, friends, or support groups can alleviate these feelings and provide understanding and empathy.

Social support also offers practical help and guidance, as in assisting with daily tasks. Additionally, sharing experiences and receiving encouragement from others who've gone through similar struggles can prove empowering and motivating.

Tips for Dealing With Your Feelings of Anxiety or Depression

If you are feeling anxious or depressed, here are some things you can do:

- **Talk to someone**
Talking to a friend, therapist, or even a hotline can be incredibly helpful. Having someone who empathizes with or understands how you are feeling and who can provide support can make a world of difference.
- **Exercise**
Regular exercise helps release endorphins, which are hormones that improve your mood. Take a walk, go for a bike ride, or try a new fitness class.
- **Make time for self-care**
Taking care of yourself is essential when dealing with anxiety and depression. Make sure to take time for things that bring you joy and make you feel good, like reading a book, watching a movie, or taking a hot bath.
- **Challenge negative thinking**
Anxiety and depression can cause us to think negatively about ourselves, our world, and our future. Try to challenge negative thoughts and replace them with more positive ones. Talk therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), and other forms of therapy can guide and support you in developing healthier thought patterns.
- **Get organized**
Having a clean and organized environment can help you to feel better about your life. Take some time to declutter and organize your home, your desk, or your closet—you'll be surprised how much it helps.

These tips may prove helpful, but may not be enough to ease your anxiety or lift you out of depression. Talking to a mental health professional is one of the most important things you can do when struggling with depression or anxiety.

Tips for Helping Someone With Anxiety or Depression

Caring for someone who's struggling with anxiety and depression can be challenging, but there are things you can do to help them cope.

- **Listen with empathy and understanding.**
Encourage them to share their feelings and thoughts, and let them know that you are there for them.
 - **Help them set and keep routines.**
Encourage them to practice self-care activities, such as getting enough sleep, eating well, and exercising regularly. These simple activities can make a major, positive impact on their mental well-being.
 - **Encourage them to seek professional help.**
Such help could include therapy, counseling, or medication. Remind them that it's okay to ask for help and that seeking treatment is a sign of strength. If you are caring for a minor for whom you have legal responsibility, you will need to secure professional help for them.
 - **Take care of yourself.**
Being a caregiver can be emotionally draining. Remember to take time for yourself and seek support from other caregivers or support groups.
- By being a supportive and understanding caregiver, you can make a positive difference in the life of someone struggling with anxiety and depression.



Contact the Center for Behavioral Health at Woods Today

The Center for Behavioral Health at Woods is a leading resource for individuals who struggle with anxiety and depression in Bucks County, Pennsylvania.

We offer comprehensive, compassionate, and customized care to individuals who face a wide range of mental health issues. We specialize in helping people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, autism, and other challenges, yet our services are available to anyone who needs them.

Our services include:

- Intake, psychiatric, and diagnostic assessments
- Individual, family, and group therapy
 - Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)
 - Dialectical behavioral therapy
 - Extended therapy
- Mindfulness
- Motivational interviewing
- Trauma-informed care
- Medication review and coordination
- Navigation of complex conditions (for eligible clients)
- Telehealth and telepsychiatry

To find out more about how the Center for Behavioral Health at Woods can be a resource for you or your loved one in the struggle with anxiety and depression, [request an appointment online today](#), or call us at 215-750-4004.



Resources for Help in a Crisis

Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741. <https://www.crisistextline.org/>

- A live, trained Crisis Counselor receives the text and responds from a secure online platform, helping the texter move from a hot moment to a cool moment.

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Helpline: 1-800-950-6264 or text 62640.

<https://mentalhealthhotline.org/anxiety-hotline/>

- A volunteer helpline answering questions and offering support for all Mental Illness topics.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: Dial 988. <https://988lifeline.org/>

Pennsylvania's Support & Referral Helpline: 855-284-2494 (TTY: 724-631-5600).

<https://www.pa.gov/guides/mental-health/>

- Connects Pennsylvanians with mental and emotional support and to local resources.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) National Helpline: 1-800-662-HELP (4357). <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline>

- A free, confidential, 24/7, 365-day-a-year treatment referral and information service (in English and Spanish) for individuals and families facing mental and/or substance use disorders



For Further Information

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**"My therapist has given
me the tools I need to live a
better, happier life"**

– Terry K.



The Center for Behavioral Health at Woods:
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[Make an Appointment!](#)

