

# Tips to help with Anxiety, ADHD, and Depression

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## CHAPTER ONE

# *Anxiety*



# Anxiety Tips for Children/Teens

- Do not rationalize away your child's anxious feelings. Try the *FEEL method*:
- • **Freeze** — pause and take some deep breaths with your child. Deep breathing can help reverse the nervous system response.
- • **Empathize** — anxiety is scary. Your child wants to know that you understand.
- • **Evaluate** — once your child is calm, it's time to figure out potential solutions.
- • **Let Go** - Let go of your guilt; you are giving your child the tools to manage their worry.
- Allow Them to Worry. Telling your child not to worry won't prevent him/her from doing so. Create a daily ritual called "Worry Time" that lasts 10 to 15 minutes. During this ritual encourage your children to write down all of their worries. Decorate a worry box to put the worry paper into. When the time is up, close the box and say good-bye to the worries for the day.
- Practice mindfulness exercises such as focusing on breathing for a few minutes to bring the mind back to the present. This allows the child to focus on "what is" instead of "what if."
- Help Them Create a step-by-step method to calm down that they can refer to when they feel anxious. For example: Step 1 take deep breaths, Step 2 listen to music, etc.

# Anxiety Tips for Adults

- Develop an exercise routine. Studies have shown that exercise reduces anxiety.
- Many people experience anxiety when they're around others. They then get embarrassed about their anxiety, causing more anxiety, and withdraw into their own minds. Withdrawing into your own head can cause increased anxiety, which others may pick up on based on your body language. If you are out with friends and family, don't be afraid to talk about it, it may be just what you need to reduce the feeling.
- Healthy distractions such as spending time with friends, listening to music, and fun activities after work will limit the amount of time you have to focus on your anxious thoughts.
- Turn stressors into a game. For example, if you work in a stressful environment you can try things like turning tasks into competitions with yourself or wearing something funny under your clothes that only you are aware of as an inside joke with yourself. This can make your work more enjoyable and less of a stress.
- Relieve anxious thoughts by writing them down in a journal. Studies have shown that the brain is smart enough to realize when it doesn't need to remember things. Chances are by writing them down you will be able to focus on the thought less and hopefully get some relief from it.



## CHAPTER TWO

# *Depression*



# Depression Tips for Children/Teens

- Acknowledge your child's sad feelings and take them seriously.
- Depression can impact memory. If your child forgets to do something important, say something that focuses on the behavior, not your child's character. For example, "I know it has been hard for you to remember your house key. What can we do to make sure it gets put in your backpack every morning?"
- Many children and teens feel unloved when depressed. Remember to say "I love you" often and give them a hug.
- Create good sleeping habits. Children and teens with depression often have difficulty sleeping, which often leads to more irritability and exhaustion. Consistent bedtimes, eliminating use of electronics one hour before bed, exercise, and reducing caffeine can help with sleep.
- Encourage your child to participate in activities. Remember, if they are not feeling up to it, honor their feelings. You should not threaten or force your child to participate.
- Understand that depression is a medical condition. Your child or teenager cannot help feeling the way they do.

# Depression Tips for Adults

- When depressed, most individuals want to withdraw and isolate. Try to reach out to close family and friends to reduce feelings of shame and guilt because you feel as if you are neglecting your relationships.
- Keep up social activities, even if you don't feel like it. Being around others will help you feel less depressed.
- Just getting out of bed can seem impossible when you are depressed. Try to exercise, which is proven to boost mood. Your energy level will improve, and you will feel less fatigued. When exercising, try to focus on mindfulness techniques to help reduce negative, obsessive thoughts. For example, focus on the wind moving against your skin, or the sound of your feet on the ground when running.
- Get a little sunlight every day! Even if it's a short walk to get coffee or sitting near a window with the curtains open. Light will improve your mood.
- Challenge your negative thoughts. When your thoughts are bringing you down, remember that it is the depression talking. Are you engaging in all-or-none thinking? Are you overgeneralizing? These are just two types of destructive thought patterns. Once you identify a thought pattern, you can challenge the thought by asking yourself "What would I think about this if I was not depressed?" or "Is there another way of looking at this situation?"



## CHAPTER THREE

# *ADHD*



# ADHD Tips for Children/Teens

- Be honest about the ADHD diagnosis to lessen the stigma. It is a condition that causes difficulty concentrating, staying focused on tasks, or organizing activities.
- Do not expect consistency from a child with ADHD. One day they can focus fine on their reading assignment and the next day they might struggle. It is not a character flaw.
- ADHD symptoms are not an excuse. Children will learn quickly that when something is difficult they can say "I don't need to do my math homework because I have ADHD." You can reframe this by saying "It may be harder to do your math homework because you have ADHD."
- Have verbal and written expectations to help your child remember his/her schedule and responsibilities. Remember: do not expect consistency!
- Encourage positive self-esteem development by focusing on your child's strengths. When someone with ADHD finds a subject dull, they will have no interest in it. But when they find something they love, they often master it well above their age level. Let your child know how few people their age can master the skill.
- Do not try to solve everything for your child. Do not rush in and give all of the answers or fix every mistake. Ask your child what they think they should do.

# ADHD Tips for Adults

- Set limits for yourself when making decisions. Adults with ADHD often have difficulty making a timely decision. Set a deadline. Pick one factor to make your decision (e.g. aesthetics, price, convenience).
- Keep your to-do list brief. Long lists can appear overwhelming and frustrating. Try to keep a list to five tasks at a time. When finished with all five, create a new list. You will feel more accomplished.
- Set a timer or alarm when you are engaging in tasks where you tend to hyperfocus. For example, if you get lost in watching online videos for hours, you need this assistance.
- Switch to online banking. Set up electronic statements and automatic payments. You will be more organized and less likely to miss payments or lose bills.
- Buy experiences not objects. Experiences create longer feelings of happiness and long-lasting memories and you will have less clutter in your home from buying more “things.”
- Keep extra medication on hand in case you forget to take your medication at home in the morning. You can keep extra medication at work, for example. You can also set a reminder on your phone.



Image: Dr. Angela Reiter

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*The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change.*

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**Carl Rogers**

*Contact us today to schedule a consultation  
for therapy or an evaluation.*

We can help you start down the path to positive  
mental health and well-being.



**Dr. Angela Reiter**  
& ASSOCIATES

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