

Help Anxious Disciples & Know You're Doing It Right

MINISTRY RESOURCE



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Certain amounts of anxiety are helpful. It's a signal that trouble could be ahead. But what about when anxiety goes beyond a signal and becomes a way of life?

Potential signals of anxiety in disciples

- Rapid thoughts that focus on the content of their problem
- Focused on insecurities
- They think people watch them or think negative things about them
- Pervasive nervousness
- Unsettled feeling in their gut
- The urge to do something, but overwhelmed with what that "thing to do" is
- Inability to concentrate and focus
- Think what they do is never enough
- Feel out of control

What happens in the mind & body?

- Adrenaline increases. Thoughts are fast and overwhelm them
- Cortisol increase. Cortisol controls levels of stress and fear
- Both adrenaline + cortisol combined = sped up fear
- Everything speeds up, including thinking and talking
- Fight, flight (or freeze) feels like the only response
- Pulse increases
- Breaths get shorter
- Muscles tense up
- Mind is flooded with content of their problems
- Difficult to relax
- Focused on what-ifs
- Talk about the negative side
- They think they have no ability to choose
- They want to focus on others, but their problems seem too big

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General Anxiety Disorder [GAD]

An unwanted life event creates an anxious response. Then the initial anxious response then turns into a regular anxious response to everyday life.

Why their anxiety increases?

- High expectations
 - They can never mess up in front of _____.
 - If they do mess up, it's the end of _____.
 - They must be viewed as competent all of the time.
 - They have to be funny, pretty, spiritual, etc. with others.
- Feeling out of control
- Shoulds: For example "I should be this..." "I should be doing this..."
- Their need to maintain a certain image
- Misplaced boundaries
- People pleasing
- Perfectionism
- Guilt

How to come alongside them?

The Mind - Intellectual

- Help them doubt their doubts
 - How can I question my beliefs a little bit everyday. (i.e. Is it really true that I have no choices in this situation?)
 - Tell yourself that you want to find out the truth.
 - Give your brain permission to take in new ideas.
- Help them label beliefs or distorted thinking (i.e. What are your "I should" statements?)
- Get curious about their high expectations
 - Are their expectations realistic? If so, speak grace and freedom in Christ.
 - What are their options if they don't meet those expectations?
- Talk with them about times they have been less anxious or anxious-free. What did they do or think to make that happen? What have they done in the past to make the anxiety stop or decrease?

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- Have them label 2-3 God-given strengths. How can they use this strength when they are anxious?
- Fill the Thank Tank: Keep a thankful journal, or at least jot down two things they are thankful for each day.
- Read
- Journal
- Listen to worship music
- Help them unlock by asking to change the topic. Distraction for a short period of time can be helpful.

The Body - Physical

- 4-Second Breathing: Breath in (4 sec); Hold breath (4 sec); Breath Out (4 sec); Hold (4 sec)
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation - Slowly tighten and release one muscle at a time and work through the body. Search for examples on the internet.
- Exercise
- Engage in an interest or hobby they enjoy
- Walk around the block or neighborhood
- Play with or walk their pet
- Take a drive
- Sit down, de-stress, and slow down their speech

The Heart - Relational

- Ask them how they would like to serve others and create an action plan.
- Talk to a positive friend
- Laughter - Call someone up who makes them laugh or watch a funny YouTube video
- Move towards community
 - When they withdraw due to anxiety, the solitude increases the anxiety
 - Establish honest relationships
 - Tell people what they need
 - Tell people what they like and don't like
- Adore Christ together

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Misc

- Create with them
- Work on areas of perfectionism
- Work on need for approval & expectation of others
- Help them make choices

NOTE: Self-check your own anxiety. Do you feel the pressure to solve their anxiety?

Additional resource links:

[Noise In Your Head Video Series](#)

[The Road to Calm Workbook](#)

[Peace: Overcoming Anxiety Tim Keller Sermon](#)

[Calm App](#)

Let me know if there are other ways I can help. Email me at hello@julielavin.com

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