

HANDLING ANXIETY

Robin Policka, MA, LPC

Sitting on the beach, listening to the waves and feeling the sand between my toes.....

Walking in the woods, listening to the birds, appreciating the beauty of wildflowers.....

Wouldn't it be wonderful if those peaceful feelings could be with us every minute of every day? But life can be very stressful! Daily responsibilities and experiences can cause us to feel anxious.

I can personally relate to this because I have experienced anxiety and panic attacks throughout my life. As a result of my own experiences and research, I have compiled a list of ideas that may help you navigate the challenges of anxiety. My prayer is that the following thoughts will give you some ideas that will work for you, so you can feel FREE TO BE all God created you to be!!

ACCEPT YOURSELF! *Celebrate your uniqueness! You are a beautiful creation of God and there is no one else in the world just like you! DON'T COMPARE YOURSELF TO ANYONE ELSE! Develop a kind, inner voice that says. "I am special, wonderful, and deeply loved by God."*

BREATHE! *Deep breathing can be incredibly helpful in handling anxiety and calming down a panic attack! Breathe deeply several times -inhale slowly through your nose and exhale very slowly! (This is always the first thing I do when I feel anxiety or panic!)*

MEDITATE! *Find a quiet place to sit or lie down. Close your eyes and picture yourself in a calming environment – by the ocean or a waterfall, or in the woods with birds chirping.*

PRAY: *Spend time in quiet, contemplative prayer –you don't have to say anything... just allow yourself to be in God's presence.*

JOURNAL: Write down your thoughts and feelings –positive and negative! Before putting your journal away, make sure you write at least one thing you are grateful for or feel positive about.

SLEEP: Be sure to get enough rest! Anxiety is heightened when we are tired.

EXERCISE: Exercise sends endorphins to your brain causing you to feel better mentally as well as physically! Think about a kind of exercise you like to do and plan the exercise time into your day!

TALK: Talk to someone you know who will listen non-judgmentally – someone you trust! This can be a friend or a counselor – or both!

EAT HEALTHY: Eating fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean meats, and drinking water does help us feel better and reduces anxiety! I recommend a vitamin supplement and suggest a calming supplement like GABA or Melatonin.

SIT DOWN, RELAX & SLOWLY DRINK A GLASS OF WATER: This often works when you feel a panic attack coming! Give it a try!

LIVE OUT THE SERENITY PRAYER: Accept what you cannot change. We cannot change others – we can only change how we react to others and how we respond to situations that are out of our control. Give it to God: What we cannot change or control needs to go directly into the hands of God.

TIME MANAGEMENT: You will find that when you make a plan and follow through with it, you will have less anxiety! But don't “beat yourself up” if you don't complete everything you planned. Just put those things on your list for the next day! Pat yourself on the back for what you DID get done!

FORGIVE: Close the door on past mistakes and forgive yourself! Each day is a new beginning and a fresh start! Forgive others for the hurt they have caused you- forgiveness frees YOU to become all God created you to be! Note: Sometimes complete forgiveness of serious wrongs is not possible. Talk to a counselor about this if you are struggling with a tough issue.

CONNECT: Connect to a church community and/or support group or a volunteer organization. As you reach out to help others, you will also feel better about

yourself! Others can support you and you can support them. Just be careful - don't overcommit yourself!

SET BOUNDARIES: *Set limits on your time! Let people know you value them and want to spend time with them, but you must take of yourself and not over-extend! Learn to say "No"!*

RELAX: *What's relaxing for you? Bubble bath, walk in the woods, sitting on the beach at Lake Michigan, reading a book? What's stopping you from doing it?*

LAUGH: *Laughter actually "uses up" stress hormones and releases endorphins for a natural boost! Watch a comedy or share a joke and **laugh out loud!***

LISTEN TO MUSIC: *Listen to calming, meditative, worshipful, or upbeat music - whatever is inspiring and uplifting for you!*

POSITIVE SELF-TALK (*Romans 12:2*): *Turn those negative thoughts around! When negative thoughts creep into your mind, put up a mental stop sign and turn that negative thinking into positive, active thinking!*

Submitted by Robin Policka, LPC

DO NOT BE ANXIOUS ABOUT ANYTHING, BUT IN EVERY SITUATION BY PRAYER AND PETITION, WITH THANKSGIVING, PRESENT YOUR REQUESTS TO GOD. AND THE PEACE OF GOD WHICH TRANSCENDS ALL UNDERSTANDING WILL GUARD YOUR HEARTS AND YOUR MINDS IN CHRIST JESUS.

Philippians 4:6-7

