

EAS/EmployeeAssistanceServices
Employee Assistance-Psychotherapy
Tom Lavin MFT, LADC
557 California Avenue
Reno, NV 89509
775-323-3330
www.EASEAP.com

Healthy Ways to Deal with Anxiety
Tom Lavin, MFT, LADC

August 2005

Anxiety makes us uncomfortable. Anxiety is often healthy: because it is uncomfortable it can motivate us to change our attitudes or our circumstances. Anxiety can motivate us to go back to college, to start a retirement savings, or get a tutor for a child not doing well in school. Anxiety can be unhealthy, too. Unhealthy anxiety has us feeling too nervous too often, worrying throughout the day, not sleeping, feeling exhausted, being on edge, irritable, having problems with memory and concentrating, having a sense of dread something terrible is going to happen.

Anxiety is pervasive. Each year about 25% of the adult population meets the criteria for an anxiety disorder. Children and teens can also have anxiety disorders. An anxiety disorder may one or more causes:

- biological (heart disease, pulmonary problems, pituitary, thyroid, adrenals, Lupis, epilepsy, B-12 deficiency, caffeine, etc)
- cognitive (distorted, counter-productive negative, pessimistic though patterns)
- behavioral: trauma, fearful associations (public speaking, dating, crowds, etc.)
- existential: lack of meaning, feeling lost, lack of life purpose

Maladaptive Coping: it is common that when people have persistent anxiety, that they engage in maladaptive coping behaviors to make the anxiety go away: misuse of alcohol

or prescription medications, over-eating, social isolation. If you identify that you're engaging in maladaptive coping behaviors, find healthier ways to deal with your anxiety.

When anxiety crosses a line and becomes unhealthy, what can we do?

1. Talk to your Primary Care Physician about your symptoms; there may be a medical cause
2. Make healthy lifestyle changes: exercise, nutrition, time management, social support, assertiveness, acceptance, journaling, meditation.
3. Learn to detach from "results" (decrease drama); fear of losing what you have, fear of not getting what you want
4. Re-frame your thoughts: decrease pessimistic-negative thoughts: (self-sabotaging thoughts based on perfectionism, approval, hopelessness, blaming, fear of rejection). Re-framing is a way of re-structuring thought patterns by changing to optimistic self-statements, like:
 - a. "Be relaxed, take it easy, take deep breaths, slow down, slow down.
 - b. "It's not a big disaster, just a challenge, take a deep breath and deal with it..."
5. Individual or family counseling.