

How To Handle Anxiety At Work So It Doesn't Destroy Your Whole Day

One of the most frustrating aspects of anxiety is that it can strike anywhere — especially in the workplace. “Most individuals operate with some anxiety at all times in order to be successful,” said Kate Cummins, a California-based clinical psychologist working at Stanford University. Think about the nerves you get before delivering a presentation or negotiating a raise, for example.

But ongoing, intense anxiety is different. Dealing with it at work can diminish your focus and derail your productivity, initiating a vicious cycle of perpetual stress. Eighteen percent of people who responded to a 2017 American Psychological Association well-being survey said they had a difficult time completing their work due to anxiety and other mental health issues. “The evaluation aspects of a work environment can be incredibly anxiety-provoking,” said Ryan Hooper, a clinical psychologist practicing in Chicago. He also said the pressure to succeed, coupled with the fear of making a mistake, can become crippling.



External factors can play a role as well. Cummins said a negative work environment or unpleasant interactions with co-workers “can trigger additional anxiety due to not feeling content or happy or welcomed in the work setting.” Workplace anxiety can also stem from traumatizing past experiences, like being fired, or concern over providing for yourself or your family in the future. But there’s no need to resign yourself to misery. Experts stress that anxiety is treatable and there are ways to deal with it in the office. Follow these steps to regain control over your workday:

1. Identify what’s possibly triggering your anxiety

The first step to managing your anxiety — which Cummins said can manifest as a fast heartbeat, sweaty palms, tightness in your chest, difficulty concentrating or a flood of negative thoughts — is uncovering its cause. Try to pinpoint the moments when you notice anxiety building. Is it when you’re commuting, when you talk to certain co-workers or when you receive a new project? If you have a difficult time identifying the exact situations that prompt your anxiety, Hooper recommended journaling about your day when you get home.

“Writing about your anxiety on paper can help you to gain a slightly different perspective on what was done and said,” he explained, adding that you should make note of what you did during the day and how you felt at the time.

2. Look for quick solutions

Once you have a good understanding of the circumstances that trigger or exacerbate your anxiety, you can brainstorm better ways to respond, Hooper said. Set boundaries with a co-worker you don't along with, for example, or try a different route if your commute is getting you down. These adjustments may not resolve your anxiety completely, but taking a proactive approach can help you feel more in control of your mental health.

3. Ask yourself two specific questions when you start to feel anxious

It's also a good idea to develop strategies for dealing with anxiety in the moment. "Find a place in the work environment that can be your reset place," Cummins said. When you feel yourself becoming anxious, retreat to your quiet place and take inventory of your thoughts. Cummins said it's helpful to ask yourself: "How am I feeling right now?" and "What happened today that brought me to this place?"

Then do some relaxation exercises. Cummins' favorites include deep breathing, listening to calming music and writing down negative thoughts so they can be turned into positive affirmations. "The more you bring the anxiety out of the subconscious dialogue in your head and into your focus point," she said, "you will feel like you have more control."

4. Make small alterations to your routine outside of work

When you deal with anxiety, it's especially important to cultivate habits that promote your physical, emotional and mental well-being. Find ways to incorporate healthier activities into your life more regularly — maybe that means taking an evening walk with your dog, grabbing lunch on Fridays with your best friend or a sweating it out in HIIT.

Another worthwhile change: Revamp your morning routine so it's not solely focused on getting ready for work, Cummins suggested. "Set your alarm for 15 minutes longer than you need and do some yoga, try to meditate, [or] sit with coffee and focus on all of the people or places or things that you enjoy," she said.

5. Take a moment to reset your brain

You restart your smartphone when it slows down or starts glitching, so why not reset your brain when anxiety takes over? You can do this by taking small breaks throughout the workday to think about what makes you happy, Cummins said. That could mean just focusing on the hot coffee in front of you or a fun concert at the end of the week. "The idea is to create space for intentional positive thoughts to increase positive emotions and help reduce the anxiety through this focus," she said.

6. Focus on the value of your job

Take some time to focus on what gives your job meaning, Hooper suggested. Maybe your work affords you and your family financial freedom, he said, or maybe you have a service job where you help make customers' lives easier. "Remembering this value can help you to see a different side to the anxiety that you experience," he said.

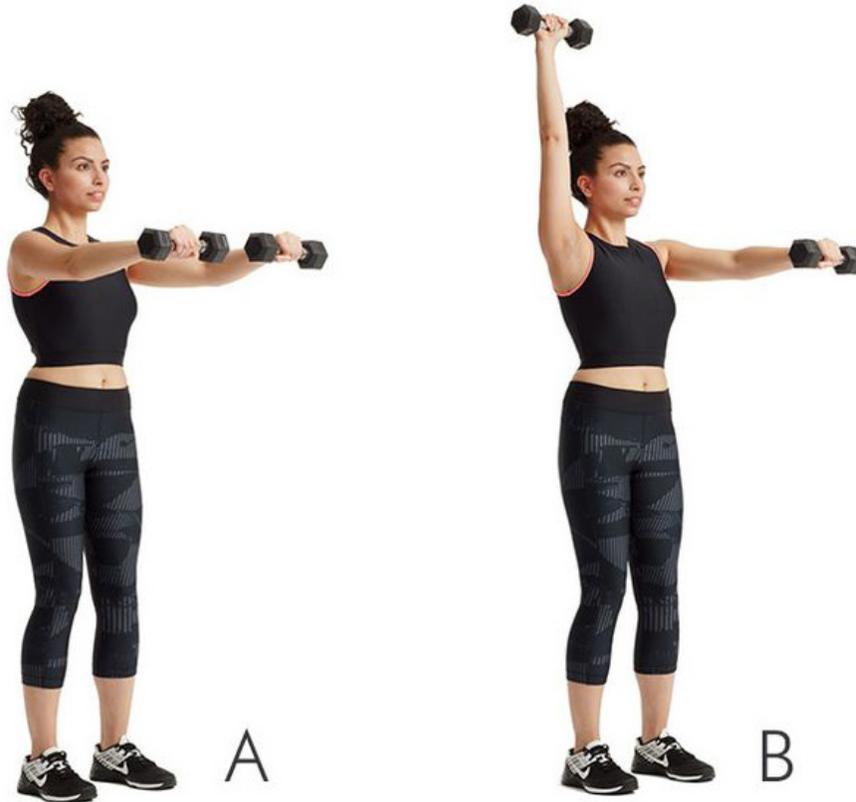
7. Tell your boss

Talk to your manager if you have trouble functioning at work or start to notice a significant decline in your work performance, Cummins said. "Most workplaces are understanding or open to discussion about stress and stress management," she said, "so sharing this information helps the person feel less alone with their anxiety." You should also seek help from a mental health professional, Hooper said, especially if you experience ongoing or debilitating anxiety. "Your anxiety may never go away completely," he added. "But [with medical help] your experience of anxiety can be much better and you can feel more empowered."

Anxiety may be common, but that doesn't mean you need to suffer through it on your own. "The truth is that every human being goes through ups and down, deals with anxiety or depression in some capacity on and off during their lives, and oftentimes needs professional help," Cummins said.

This Week's Exercise

GATOR PRESS



HOW TO DO IT:

1. Stand with your feet hip-width apart, knees softly bent, and hold a dumbbell in each hand, arms raised in front of you at shoulder height, palms facing down (a).
2. Keeping both arms straight, raise your right arm overhead (b).
3. Reverse to return to start; repeat on the other side. That's one rep.
4. Continue alternating.

Exercise source: <http://bit.ly/2PQb4in>

Regular exercise can help you control your weight, reduce your risk of heart disease, and strengthen your bones and muscles. But if it's been awhile since you've exercised and you have health issues or concerns, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.

GREEK CHICKPEA SALAD



Ingredients

15 ounce can chickpeas, rinsed and drained (Goya)
2 cups diced Persian cucumber
1 green bell pepper, sliced
1 1/3 cups grape tomatoes, halved
20 kalamata or gaeta olives
1/4 cup red onion, sliced lengthwise
4 ounces fresh feta, sliced thick

Dressing:
juice of 2 fresh lemons
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
2 teaspoons fresh oregano leaves, minced
1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Directions

1. In each of 4 (4-cup) containers or bowls, arrange 1/3 cup chickpeas, 1/2 cup cucumber, 1/4 green pepper, 1/3 cup tomato, olives and red onion, top with Feta cheese.
2. In a small bowl whisk the lemon juice, olive oil, oregano, salt and pepper.
3. Serve about 1 1/2 tablespoons dressing with each salad.

Nutrition Information

Yield: 4 servings, Serving Size: 1 container

Amount Per Serving:
Freestyle Points: 6
Points +: 8
Calories: 292
Total Fat: 16g
Saturated Fat: 5.5g
Cholesterol: 25mg
Sodium: 713.5mg
Carbohydrates: 28.5g
Fiber: 6.5g
Sugar: 4g
Protein: 11g

Recipe source:

<http://bit.ly/2omdLMf>