



# ANXIETY

College offers many opportunities. It is a chance to meet new people, learn new things, engage in new activities, and join organizations. However, sometimes these opportunities can seem overwhelming. Papers, exams, games, practices, homework, social obligations, and jobs may replace time for relaxation. You might begin to feel that there are not enough hours in the day to get everything done. These pressures, in combination with maintaining or creating relationships, learning to be independent, and trying to balance work with play, can lead to anxiety.

Most students will feel stressed at some point in their college careers, but for some this anxiety will not go away, **even when stressors do**. These students live in a constant state of worry and fear that interferes with their daily lives. For these students, getting through college might seem like climbing a never-ending mountain.

If you are experiencing this anxiety, **you are not alone**. Feeling nervous or fearful is what keeps us from approaching a snarling dog or from walking down a dark alley late at night. There are many situations in which anxiety is a normal reaction— such as speaking in front of a crowd or taking an exam. However, it is important to know when to get help and that **you can do something about anxiety**.



## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF ANXIETY

### PHYSICAL

- Dizziness or faintness
- Dry mouth/thirst
- Fatigue
- Gastrointestinal problems (diarrhea/constipation)
- Headaches
- Hyperactivity
- Hypertension (high blood pressure)
- Hyperventilation
- Knotted stomach/tense muscles
- Loss or increase in appetite
- Nausea/vomiting
- Rapid or irregular heartbeat
- Sexual Problems
- Shaking hands or tremors
- Shortness of breath or chest tightness
- Sweating (especially of the palms)
- Tingling in extremities (“pins and needles”)

### PSYCHOLOGICAL

- Aggressiveness
- Compulsive shopping
- Difficulty concentrating or inability to focus
- Disruptive eating (over- or under-eating)
- Fear or panic
- Feeling apprehensive or worried
- Hyper-alert (easily startled/jumpiness)
- Impatience
- Inability to relax
- Increased smoking or alcohol consumption
- Irritability
- Isolation
- Reckless behavior
- Restlessness
- Sleep disturbances

# COPING WITH ANXIETY

- **Reach out to others.** Spend time with friends or loved ones. Tell them about your fears, feelings, or uncertainties.
- **Express your feelings.** Do not keep your emotions bottled up. Find a way to experience feelings that is comfortable for you— talk to someone (friend, family member, counselor, religious leader, professor, etc.), write in a journal, go to a support group.
- **Focus upon a realistic assessment of your personal situation.** Try not to magnify your concerns.
- **Try to stay organized.** Keep a planner so that you know when papers and exams are coming up. Make sure to plan time for yourself away from work, class, and studying.
- **Cut down on alcohol and caffeine.** These can increase symptoms of anxiety.
- **Take care of your body.** Try to eat nutritious meals, get exercise, and get enough sleep.
- **Identify and minimize stressors.** Learn what situations or events cause you the most stress, and how to cope with them. Realize that life can be difficult, and that it is not so much a matter of what events have occurred, but what meaning we give to those events . We cannot eliminate stressful events, but we can reckon with them.
- **Learn stress management and relaxation techniques.** Try yoga or meditation to help you focus on being calm. Experiment with muscle relaxation exercises, deep breathing, and mental or guided imagery.
- **Challenge the critical voice in your head.** Anxiety can make you feel like you are not normal or that you are a failure. You might find yourself thinking that other people are able to manage stress, that other people aren't as scared as you, or that you are a bad student or person because you can't handle all of your responsibilities. Realize that these thoughts are coming from anxiety— not you. Remember, the way others look may not show how they really feel.

## SERVICES AND RESOURCES FOR ANXIETY

Mental Health Services at the Colonial Health Center offers a number of services for students experiencing anxiety:

- **Individual counseling:** Students can see a counselor for brief therapy to work on issues related to anxiety; sessions usually occur on a weekly basis
- **Group counseling:** Students coping with ongoing anxiety may wish to consider joining at group at MHS, which are free and unlimited to GW students
- **Learning skills and Self-Help Library:** Students can peruse pamphlets, books, podcasts, and videos on anxiety as well as many other topics
- **Workshops** are offered throughout the year on various topics, including anxiety; visit our website for information about upcoming workshops
- **Referrals** are available for therapists in the community, mental health agencies, and other campus and community resources
- **MHS's website** ([healthcenter.gwu.edu](http://healthcenter.gwu.edu)) has up-to-date information on services offered by MHS, as well as links to related topics; also visit us on Facebook ([facebook.com/GWHealthCenter](https://facebook.com/GWHealthCenter)) or Twitter ([@GWHealthCenter](https://twitter.com/GWHealthCenter))
- **Call-a-Counselor 24/7:** Students may contact MHS anytime, day or night, to speak to a counselor about their mental health concerns, including anxiety; (202) 994-5300



Mental Health Services at the Colonial Health Center offers workshops, an online self-help library, and other online resources as well as individual and group counseling. To access services, come in or call us at (202) 994-5300.