

1. **Medication.** Mike took medication for his Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder as part of his therapy and learned to trust that his daughter wasn't in constant danger. There are a number of anti-anxiety medications that offer immediate and powerful help. Of course, prospective patients need to consult with their doctor or a psychiatrist.

2. **Distraction.** If you're having a panic attack or are highly anxious you can use this technique just to get through it. Focus on something to distract you from your anxiety until it subsides. It could be a reading, watching TV, or a project your working on. Later, when you're feeling up to it, address your feelings.

3. **Floating.** People with panic disorder make the mistake of trying to control their symptoms. But you can't stop a panic attack once it's started. Instead, realize that it's not going to hurt you and let it ride its course by "floating" with it. Paradoxically, this should help it subside.

4. **Breathing exercises.** Anxious people breathe rapid, shallow breaths from their chest. Slow, deep breathing from your stomach helps you relax. Breathe in deep until you fill your lungs, hold it inside for the count of ten, slowly exhale. Repeat this until your body relaxes. (See below for how to combine this with meditation on Scripture using "Breath Prayers.")

5. **Muscle Relaxation.** Anxiety accumulates in our bodies and needs to be discharged. Tensing and then relaxing your muscles is a way to soothe your stressed body.

To start sit or lay down in a comfortable position. Do some deep breathing exercises then go through certain muscle groups in your body, tensing the muscle for a count of ten and then relaxing. You can go through your whole body, head to toe or you can focus just on those muscles that are tight and tense from gathering anxiety – forehead, jaw, neck/shoulders, back, hands.

6. **Wait.** Kayla, the agoraphobic referenced earlier, learned to utilize this technique. Instead of driving home from the grocery store when she felt panicked she went to her car and waited until she calmed down. Then she gathered herself and went back into the store to bring her groceries through the check out line. Retreating to her car gave her permission to go to a safe place to calm down and re-gain her courage to go back into the store.

It was important that Kayla went back into the store because that's what restored her confidence. To not go back and face your fear is avoidance and increases the power of your fear to paralyze you.

7. **Prayer.** The Bible offers a powerful, immediate prescription for anxiety: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, 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).

8. **Rest.** Many people today try to get too much done too quickly and need to set more realistic expectations and get enough rest. Honoring the Sabbath is one of the Ten Commandments and it's more needed today than it was 3,000 years ago.

9. **Diet.** To reduce anxiety, avoid caffeine and nicotine and decrease sugar and fat intake.

10. **Massage.** Deep tissue massage or even a good back or neck rub can relax your body and help you unwind.

11. **Exercise.** Jog, bike, lift weights, walk, or do some other aerobic activity for 30 minutes at least three times a week and you'll feel increases in energy, well-being, and confidence and you'll release pent up stress in your body.

12. **Verbalize your feelings to a safe person.** At least once a day, process the events of your day and share your feelings with a caring listener. This is one of the most things you can do for your mental health.

13. **Re-prioritize your schedule.** Left unchecked, anxiety feeds on itself by leading you to become helter-skelter in thought and activity. It's good to take a step back, review your priorities, make a to do list, and focus on them one at a time.

Psychological/Therapy

14. **Assess your Anxiety.** Understanding when you're anxious and what causes you to get anxious will enable you to get the help you need before you're overloaded or in a crisis.

15. **Admit your Feelings.** When you're angry, afraid, sad, or whatever you're feeling, accept it and talk it through with your therapist, support group, or friend. Go ahead and vent – get some air! (You can do this with God too!)

16. **Accept your Limitations.** Learning when to say no empowers you to say yes and accomplish great things. You can't do everything you want to do, you can't please everybody, and you can't do things perfectly. Instead, focus on what's most important and do your best until you've accomplished it. Some people feel like it's not loving to set limits and say no, but [Jesus Set Boundaries](#).

17. **Adjust your Self-talk.** Anxious people need to change counter the negative things they say to themselves and use positive self-talk to help them cope with anxiety and to better care for themselves. As I'm using the term, self-talk is not a self-help project. Think of it as saying God's Word to yourself or prayerfully reminding yourself of God's grace to you. (For instance read [Renew your Mind and Life through Romans 8](#).)

Starla learned to do this to overcome her social phobia. Instead of fretting, "They're going to see me blush. I'll make a fool of myself." She said to herself, "I don't need to impress anybody. I like me. I can introduce myself."

Other examples of replacing anxious self-talk with affirming self talk are:

- "What will they think if I lose it?" -> "*If I start to panic I'll let it pass and probably no one will notice.*"
- "Oh no – my heart is racing again. I feel like I can't breathe! What's the matter with me?" -> "*I'm experiencing anxiety symptoms. I'm going to trust that God is with me.*"
- "I'll never get over this anxiety." -> "*I'm working to implement my treatment program. God is helping me. It takes time to change.*"
- "I'm weak." -> "*It's taking courage for me to face this problem.*"
- "I'm not good enough." -> "*I am loved, forgiven, and valuable.*"
- "I'm going to get hurt again." -> "*I can set a boundary to protect myself.*"

18. **Address Relational Conflicts and Set Boundaries.** Most people with anxiety problems fearfully avoid conflicts with other people, thereby internalizing their anger and generating more anxiety. And the more they avoid their fear the bigger it becomes!

To overcome anxiety they need to face their fears. They need to learn say no, express a dissenting opinion, ask for what they need, and verbalize their anger to those who hurt, control, or offend them. They need to "speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15). Only then are they able to discover that God's unconditional love is indeed sufficient for them.

19. **Desensitize Yourself.** To face your fear you may need to start small. For instance, Chad's therapist helped him learn to speak out loud in class without panicking by using a technique called *systematic desensitization* in which he gradually faced his fear.

Jared began by imagining giving a speech in class and he made sure to picture Jesus in the audience smiling his approval. Then he gave his speech in his room in front of the mirror. Then to his roommate. Then to his professor in the classroom. And finally, he gave his speech in front of the whole class. (And in every step of courage he reminded himself that Christ was with him, loving him no matter how he performed.)

20. **Active Relaxation through Biofeedback.** By working with a therapist or a doctor trained in the use of biofeedback you can learn to reprogram the way you respond to stressful events.

Spiritual

21. **Thankfulness.** Being thankful for God's blessings in your life – small and large – helps secure those blessings for your benefit and is a healing balm when anxious concerns burden you. Everyday make a gratitude list on paper or in your head. Thank God in prayers of thanks and praise. Verbalize your appreciations with a friend.

22. **Worship.** Singing songs of praise to God tunes your soul to God and His loving purposes for you. When we worship him as our Lord then we can relax.

23. **Bible Study.** The Bible offers much comfort and wisdom for those who are anxious and troubled. I've gathered some of my favorite [Antidotes for Anxiety from the Bible](#). I also researched the "Fear Nots" of the Bible and wrote, [31 Days to Freedom from Fear](#).

24. **Meditation on Scripture**. Meditation on Bible passages is a powerful relaxant. For instance, I often do this with Psalm 23, prayerfully reciting the psalm to myself, imagining it's vivid, soothing scenes and entrusting my concerns to my Good Shepherd. I also like to meditate on nature. Near my home is a lake, many sycamore trees, flowers of all types, and music-making birds that I use to focus my thoughts and prayers on God and his beauty.
25. **Abiding in Prayer**. Pick a comforting phrase or verse from the Bible and focus on it, praying it quietly and deeply over and over. For instance, I've done this with God's words to me in Psalm 46:10: "Be still and know that I am God." Then I pray the Scripture over my burdens, one by one.
26. **Breath Prayers**. Many anxious people I have worked with have found tremendous help through using a Breath Prayer exercise that combines deep, relaxing breathing with meditation on Scripture. Breathing in and out a comforting phrase of Scripture can bring extraordinary peace from God.
27. **Praying the Psalms**. Many of the Psalms address anxiety, worry, and fear. The Psalmist teaches us how to pray about our concerns and find comfort from God – even if our circumstances haven't improved yet. Psalm 27 is a great example of a Psalm that helps us to overcome our fears by focusing on the Lord and delighting in him.
28. **Journaling**. Writing down your worries and fears has been proven in research to be cathartic. I can testify to this, along with many people I have counseled. Journaling is especially therapeutic if you approach as writing your own Psalm to God.
29. **Submit to God Continually**. I believe that learning to submit to the Sovereign Lord, as you do whatever you're doing, can cure many anxiety problems. This is my own story. To submit to God is to stop trying to control people (and what they think), situations, and outcomes of things and instead trust God and follow his lead.
30. **Solitude**. In Psalm 23 David says of the Good Shepherd: "He restores my soul." How? The earlier verses tell us: make the Lord your Shepherd (submit to him) and learn to rest quietly with him in his green pastures and beside his still waters.
31. **Serve Others**. Find someone else who is anxious, or who has some other problem, and offer a listening ear or some practical help. Your problems won't seem so big and you'll feel better about yourself knowing that God is using you to make a difference for someone else.