

Taking Charge: Help Yourself to a Happy 2012



Self-Help Methods for Generalized Anxiety Disorder

Individuals who exercise report fewer symptoms of anxiety and depression, and lower levels of stress and anger. Exercise appears to affect, like an antidepressant, particular neurotransmitter systems in the brain, and it helps patients with depression re-establish positive behaviors.

-Science Daily, April 5, 2010

A person suffering from Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) lives with excessive worry often over every aspect of their lives. GAD, genetic in origin and most likely triggered by stress, is a very common condition with approximately 3 to 4 people out of 100 meeting the criteria for GAD.

The major symptom of GAD is a state of continual worry even though there may be no reason for it. A person worries about everything such as family or

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relationship problems, work issues, money, health, and other problems. Even though someone with GADs must realize their worrying is extreme, it is still very difficult for them to get it under control.

There are self-help methods a person can use to aid with their recovery. These methods do not replace medical treatment but complement it. Some activities that may reduce anxiety levels are: meditation, aerobic exercise, and yoga. In addition to exercise, you can make changes in your lifestyle. Give up activities that cause your symptoms to flare up such as excessive drinking, working, gambling, eating, and drug use.

If possible, find a self-help group for those with generalized anxiety disorder. In this type of environment, participants can empathize with one another and share experiences.. This can be very therapeutic. If you cannot find a group, start one. Get others to help you. Another important part of your recovery can be building a support network. Approach mental health professionals, family, friends, or religious leaders.

These are just some things you can do to help yourself. There are many other things you can do. You should do some research, find out about other self-help methods you can engage in to help with your recovery.

By Tony Legere

References:

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“How to Treat General Anxiety Disorder Naturally.” [eHow health](http://www.ehow.com/how_2088515_treat-general-anxiety-disorder-naturally.html). 20 April 2011. 10 December 2011. <http://www.ehow.com/how_2088515_treat-general-anxiety-disorder-naturally.html>

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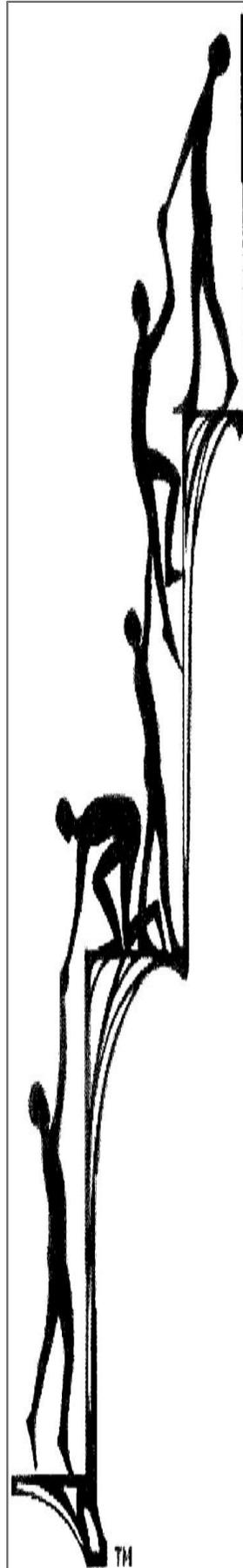
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How to Reduce Anxiety

Here are few a things you can do to keep your anxiety levels in check:

Exercise

Sleep

Avoid Substance abuse

Seek social support

Take time to relax

Engage in meaningful work

Top Fish for Omega-3 (3 ½ ounces):

Mackerel (Atlantic) 2.5 grams
 Anchovies (canned) 2.1 grams
 Salmon (Atlantic) (fresh) 1.7 grams
 Salmon (pink) (canned) 1.7 grams
 Herring (Atlantic) 1.7 grams
 Please note that cod and haddock have only 0.2 grams of omega-3.



Taking a daily fish oil capsule can stave off mental illness in those at highest risk, trial findings suggest.

*-BBC Mobile News
 February 2010*



A Case for Omega-3 for Mental Health

A study done at Harvard University indicates that fish oil, a rich source of omega-3, can treat bipolar disorder. Other studies have revealed that omega-3 can treat depression, memory loss and cognitive function. Those who add a fish oil supplement have shown significant improvement in anxiety, insomnia, sadness, decreased sexual desire and suicidal thoughts.

The active ingredients are eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA), which is essential to normal brain function, and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) which helps in serotonin, an important brain chemical. Low levels of DHA have been linked to low serotonin levels and increased tendency for depression and suicide.

Omega-3 can be found mostly in fish, particularly oily, coldwater fish such as mackerel, salmon, sardines and herring. All of these can be found locally, in either fresh or preserved, in supermarkets, fish markets and fish trucks across the Annapolis Valley. For those who don't like or can't have fish, the other major source is flax. Flax seeds can be found in some local stores. It can be added to cereals, breads and other baked goods. Baked goods containing flax are becoming increasingly popular in stores. However, flax seeds aren't as easily processed in the body as fish oil. Both fish oil and flax seed supplements are also available in stores. If you choose this route, read the instructions because there may be side effects. Please note that cod isn't a good source of omega-3 and therefore cod liver oil supplements aren't recommended.

While omega-3 can help, it's still important to have a regular psychiatric checkup and take your medication if you have a serious mental illness. In time, your need for medication may lessen. Studies on nutrition and mental illness are still ongoing, but it's obvious that good nutrition is important to good mental health. Talk to a dietitian who'll help you create a meal plan according to your particular needs and budget.

By Melinda Cadarette

Sources:

"Omega 3 fatty acids can ease symptoms of mood disorders." Website: <http://www.moodletter.com/FishOilforMoodDisorders.htm>
 Hausman, Patricia and Hurley, Judith Benn. "Fish Oil Facts." The Healing Foods: The Ultimate Authority on the Curative Power of Nutrition. Pgs. 138-9.

Health Canada recommends that people of all ages include omega-3 fatty acids in their diet every day.²⁵

The recommended amounts for adults aged 19 and over are:

- MEN - 1.6 grams daily
- WOMEN - 1.1 grams daily

From Pet to Professional Support Animals for Mental Illness

Jack was having a “hyper” day. Not only did he knock over my prized potted Norfolk Pine three times, uprooting it the last time, but he was found dangling by his claws from my treasured handmade drapes. It didn’t stop there. Jack spent hours running round the house pausing only to fight with my other two older cats, both female.

Jack is my nine month old fluffy orange male cat. Nothing he does makes me sorry I rescued him through the adoption program at a local vet. With his endless energy and curiosity, he has enriched the life of our family.

Research has found that pets are therapeutic for people with mood and anxiety disorders. Pets come with their own benefit package. They:

- Help ease loneliness and isolation
- Supply much needed physical contact
- Improve our mood by their companionship
- Provides a link to reality as we look after their needs

Some animals most often, dogs, no longer have the status of a pet. Rather they are used in therapeutic programs as support dogs much as they are used by the blind. They are known as psychiatric service dogs and they perform many tasks. They can seek help if their handler is experiencing an episode of mania, panic attacks or dissociation. It is difficult to understand how a dog can help with situations such as “mania, panic attacks or dissociation.” In an emergency, for example, a dog can learn to operate the K-9 Rescue phone to summon help during a crisis.

Use can be made of a dog’s internal alarm clock to remind the handler to take medication on time. The dog is taught to expect to be fed or to have a cookie break or to go for a walk at the same time every day. If always rewarded, this behavior becomes habitual, a task that serves to remind the handler that it is time to stop an ongoing activity and to take the prescribed medication.

Caring animals can revolutionize lives.

By Heather Frenette

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A Mental Health Perspective Mission Statement:

The purpose of this newsletter is to bring faith, hope and courage to members of the local mental health community of Kings County, Nova Scotia, as well as others who are involved with a mental, emotional or psychological condition.

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Donations to support this newsletter and other important programs and services can be made to CMHA Kings County, Suite 3, 11 Opportunity Lane, Coldbrook, PO Box 894, Kentville, NS, B4N 4H8.
 (Cheque or money order will be accepted).

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