

# You Got This



DISCOVERING WHAT WORKS  
FOR YOU WHEN YOU HAVE  
ANXIETY, DEPRESSION AND  
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

**STEP**   
**UP**    
  *For* **BETTER  
HEALTH**

## Many of us feel anxious from time to time.

But if your worries and fears seem overwhelming,  
there are things you can do to feel better.

### Figuring out what causes your anxiety is an important step.

- There may be more than one cause.
- Pay attention to your feelings.
- Stress can be caused by external factors like work, school, finances and in relationships or from internal factors like chronic illness or side effects from medications.
- Anxiety may occur as a symptom of clinical (major) depression. It's also common to have depression that's triggered by an anxiety disorder.
- People may smoke to cope with anxiety, but smoking does not relieve the daily stressors and causes many other health problems.



### Symptoms of anxiety

#### Emotional symptoms

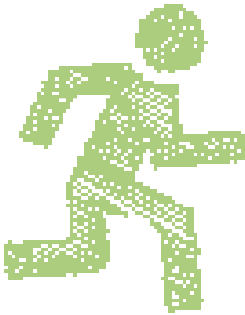
- ✓ Feeling tense or restless
- ✓ Obsessive thinking
- ✓ Trouble concentrating
- ✓ Excessive worry, fear or panic
- ✓ Avoiding things that cause anxiety

#### Physical symptoms

- ✓ Trouble sleeping
- ✓ Short, shallow breathing
- ✓ Tightness of chest
- ✓ Rapid heartbeat
- ✓ Nausea or dizziness
- ✓ Sweating or trembling
- ✓ Headache

## How can you feel better?

- ✓ Acknowledge your feelings about the situation. If you can identify what problem is causing your anxiety try to work on one thing a day to solve it.
- ✓ Take a break. Give yourself some time to slow down and focus on your breathing.
- ✓ Practice positive self-talk. Tell yourself “I feel anxious, but this feeling will pass.”



- ✓ Find things to do to boost your mood. Take a walk, read, listen to music or work on a hobby.
- ✓ Relax your body. Learn skills to relax your body such as progressive relaxation. These skills can help manage anxiety, depression and high blood pressure.
- ✓ Try some self-soothing activities like gardening, aromatherapy with essential oils or spending time with a pet.

## Managing your anxiety

### Focus on things you can control

- ✓ Aim for doing your best, not perfection.
- ✓ Work on time management or organizational skills.
- ✓ Decide to take 10 minutes each day to journal what you are worried about.

### Express your feelings

- ✓ Talk to others
- ✓ Keep a journal
- ✓ Join a support group

### Take care of your body

- ✓ Exercise
- ✓ Eat healthy, limit alcohol
- ✓ Get enough sleep

## Depression is more than just feeling sad.

It's a serious mental condition that requires treatment.

Many times depression and anxiety occur together and have similar treatments.

### What causes depression?

Researches and mental health professionals are still working to understand the causes of depression.

This is what we do know:

- It is unlikely that a single factor causes depression.
- It is most likely caused by a combination of things such as genetics (i.e., family history of someone having depression), chemical changes in the brain, and/or environmental factors.
- Traumatic experiences can also add to the development of depression and other disorders. It is important to tell your mental health provider or physician if you have experienced a traumatic incident as this can affect the way the depression is treated.



### Symptoms of depression

#### Emotional symptoms

- ✓ Persistent sad, anxious, or “empty” feelings
- ✓ Feelings of hopelessness
- ✓ Feeling bad about yourself, like you're a failure or letting your family down
- ✓ Thoughts of suicide, suicide attempts

- ✓ Loss of interest or pleasure in doing things you once enjoyed.

#### Physical symptoms

- ✓ Overeating, appetite loss
- ✓ Aches or pains, headache
- ✓ Cramps or digestive problems
- ✓ Fatigue and decreased energy

## How can you help yourself?

- ✓ Try to see a health professional as soon as possible.
- ✓ Try to be more active. Do an activity you once enjoyed.
- ✓ Set realistic goals for yourself.
- ✓ Break up large tasks into smaller ones.



- ✓ Set priorities and do one project at a time.
- ✓ Expect your mood to improve gradually. Often sleep and appetite will improve before your depressed mood lifts.
- ✓ Discuss important decisions like marriage, divorce, or changing jobs with people you know well, until you feel better.
- ✓ Continue to educate yourself about depression.

## Managing your depression

### Talk to a mental health professional

- ✓ Discuss when your symptoms started, how long they have lasted, how severe they are, and if they have occurred before and if so, how were they treated.

### Talk to your doctor

- ✓ To rule out a virus or thyroid disorder that may cause similar symptoms.

### Treatment

- ✓ Medication or psychotherapy are common treatments.
- ✓ Let your doctor or mental health professional know of any unusual mood swings.

## The goal is to discover what works for you.

Choose your strategies, take action,  
and start enjoying the benefits.

## Your reaction to stress may affect your blood pressure

There's no proof that stress by itself causes long-term high blood pressure. But reacting to stress in unhealthy ways may increase your risk of high blood pressure, heart attacks and strokes.

Also, heart disease may be linked to other stress-related health conditions, such as:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Isolation from friends and family



Increases in blood pressure related to stress can be dramatic. But when your stress goes away, your blood pressure returns to normal. However, even frequent, temporary spikes in blood pressure can damage your blood vessels, heart and kidneys in a way similar to long-term high blood pressure.

## Symptoms of high blood pressure

### Emotional symptoms

- ✓ Confusion
- ✓ Irritability

### Physical symptoms

- ✓ Severe headache
- ✓ Vision problems

- ✓ Chest pain
- ✓ Difficulty breathing
- ✓ Fatigue, muscle aches
- ✓ Irregular heartbeat
- ✓ Blood in the urine
- ✓ Pounding in your chest, neck, or ears

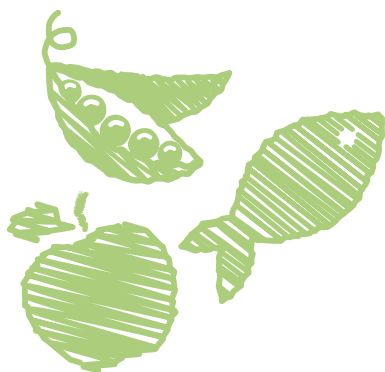
# How can you help yourself?

## Check your blood pressure

- ✓ This is the only way to know if you have high blood pressure.

## Know your numbers

- ✓ Normal blood pressure is less than 120/80 (said as “120 over 80”).
- ✓ Elevated blood pressure is 120/80 to 129/80.
- ✓ High blood pressure is 130/80 or higher.
- ✓ Hypertensive Crisis is higher than 180/120. Call 911.



## Eat a balanced diet

- ✓ Fruits and vegetables
- ✓ Low-fat dairy
- ✓ Whole grains
- ✓ Nuts and seeds
- ✓ Lean protein such as skinless poultry and fish

## Managing your high blood pressure

### Relax

- ✓ Simplify your schedule
- ✓ Try yoga and meditation
- ✓ Take deep and slow breaths
- ✓ Get plenty of sleep
- ✓ Write down your thoughts in a notebook or journal

### Take care of your body

- ✓ Exercise with your doctor's permission
- ✓ If you smoke, plan to quit
- ✓ Avoid alcohol
- ✓ Get enough sleep
- ✓ Eat more fruits and vegetables

## South Country Health Alliance Member Services

1-866-567-7242, TTY 1-800-627-3529 or 711

Attention: If you need free help interpreting this document, call the above number.

Digniin. Haddii aad u baahantahay caawimaad lacag-la'ann ah ee tarjumaadda (afcelinta) qorallkan, lambarka kore wac.

Atención. Si desea recibir asistencia gratuita para interpretar este document, llame al número indicado arriba.

Thov ua twb zoo nyeem. Yog hais tias koj xav tau kev pab txhais lus rau tsab ntaub ntawv no pub dawb, ces hu rau tus najnpawb xov tooj saum toj no.



1-866-567-7242, TTY 711.

members@mnscha.org

#5567

### Citations

Understanding Depression-Young Adults: Get the Facts  
SAMHSA, HHS Publication No. (SMA) 16-5004

Mayo Clinic Website. January 09, 2019 “Your reaction to stress may affect your blood pressure” <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/high-blood-pressure/in-depth/stress-and-high-blood-pressure/art-20044190>.