



University Counseling Center The George Washington University

2033 K Street, NW, Suite 330 * 202.994.5300 * <http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel>

Anxiety. College offers many opportunities. It's 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 aren't enough hours in a 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” feeling)

Psychological

Aggressiveness
Compulsive shopping
Difficulty concentrating or inability to focus
Disruptive eating (over-/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



If you identify with some of the symptoms described above and are concerned that you might suffer from too much anxiety, please call the UCC (202.994.5300) and ask to set up an appointment with a counselor.

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.** Don't keep your emotions bottled up. Find a way to experience them 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 can not 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 the anxiety – not you. Remember, the way others look may not show how they really feel.

Services and Resources for Anxiety

The UCC 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 Therapy:** Students coping with ongoing anxiety may wish to consider the *Anxiety and Stress Management* group. Other UCC groups include *Family Stress*, *Academic Progress Group*, and *Seniors in Transition*.
- * **Learning Skills and Self-Help Resources:** Students can peruse pamphlets, books, tapes, and videotapes on anxiety, depression, and many other topics.
- * **Workshops** are offered throughout the year on various topics, including anxiety. See the UCC's website for upcoming workshops.
- * **Referrals** are available for therapists in the community, for mental health agencies, and for other campus and community resources.
- * **The UCC Website (<http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel>)** has up-to-date information on services offered by the UCC as well as links to related topics.
- * **Call-A-Counselor 24/7:** Students may contact the UCC anytime, day or night, to speak with a counselor about their mental health concerns, including anxiety. Just call 202.994.5300.

Other Campus Resources

For emergencies, call the University Police Department (Foggy Bottom campus 202.994.6111, Mount Vernon campus 202.242.6111) or proceed directly to the nearest hospital.

Disability Support Services (DSS): Students diagnosed with an anxiety disorder can enroll with DSS to request accommodations or to access academic support resources. Contact DSS at 202.994.8250 to obtain further information.