

Dealing with Stress, Worry, and Anxiety

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Is Anxiety Bad? It Depends...

1. The Bible specifically addresses worry that represents a lack of trust in God.
 2. God's design for anxiety was that it would be a "short-lived" response to a threat.
 3. Anxiety becomes problematic when it is not related to realistic fears, becomes a chronic pattern, and/or when it interferes/prevents normal functioning.
- Note: The Bible is not a medical manual, therefore, it won't answer all of our questions about anxiety disorders.

3 Categories of Anxiety

1. **Spiritual Anxiety** – anxiety we feel when we are not putting our faith and trust in God to deal with our circumstances.
2. **Situational Anxiety** – a normal response to a threatening situation.
3. **Anxiety Disorders** – the most common occurring category of mental health disorders and conditions.

1. Spiritual Anxiety

Spiritual Anxiety

- It is a result of a pattern/habit of incorrect perspective, beliefs, and thinking.
- It results when we begin to focus on our problems rather than focusing on God.
- Often results when we believe **we** must "fix" something that is beyond our control.

- Spiritual anxiety often results when we try to predict what will happen in the future (we tend to forget God's grace!).
- While Believers *reverently fear* God, we do not have to be afraid of Him.
- However, nonbelievers live with the very real "fear" of God and His judgment.

Words of Jesus

Matthew 6: 25-34

25. "Therefore I say unto you, **Take no thought** for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?"

26. "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?"

27. "Which of you **by taking thought** can add one cubit unto his stature?"

Words of Jesus

Matthew 6: 25-34

28. "And why **take ye thought** for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:"

29. "And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

30. "Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, **O ye of little faith?**"

31. "Therefore **take no thought**, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?"

Words of Jesus

Matthew 6: 25-34

32. "(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."

33. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

34. "Take **therefore no thought** for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

More Words from Jesus on Anxiety

- **Matthew 13:22** "He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the **care of this world**, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful."
- In this illustration, worry and anxiety overshadow the Word of God, and inhibit the development of fruit.

Biblical Passages & Anxiety

- 1 Peter 5:7 "**Casting** all your care upon him; for he careth for you."
 - In the same way the disciples **cast** their garments on the colt so Jesus could sit on them (*Luke 19:35*), so we should **cast** our cares and anxiety upon the Lord.
- Why should you give your cares over to the Lord? **Because he cares for you!**

Philippians 4: 6-8

- Verse 6: "**Be careful** for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."
 - "**Be careful**" in this passage means:
 - ✦ to be anxious
 - ✦ to be troubled with cares

Philippians 4: 6-8

- Verse 7: *“And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”*
 - This verse describes the natural result of verse six.
 - When we give all our requests and concerns to God instead of anxiously dwelling on them, God’s peace will protect our hearts and minds.

Philippians 4: 6-8

- Verse 8: *“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are **true**, whatsoever things are **honest**, whatsoever things are **just**, whatsoever things are **pure**, whatsoever things are **lovely**, whatsoever things are of **good report**; if there be any **virtue**, and if there be any **praise**, think on these things.”*
- To follow the instruction of Verse 6, we use Verse 8 to see what we **should** think about.

The Role of Our Thinking

- Why is it important to think on things that are true, honest, pure, lovely, of good report, etc.?
- **Proverbs 23:7** *“For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.”*
 - Often, anxious thinking leads to anxious behavior.
- Note: Worry is part of being human. Our responsibility is to *shift* our thinking

Luke 10: 38-42

38. *“Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.”*
39. *“And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard his word.”*
40. *“But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.”*

Luke 10: 38-42

41. *“And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things:”*
42. *“But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”*
 - Martha was distracted from Jesus’ teaching and was focusing on **doing** things rather than **being** with Jesus.
 - Mary chose to **be with Jesus**, to sit at his feet, and to **her his word**.

David’s Response to Stress

- **Psalm 56:3-4** *“What time I am afraid, I will **trust** in thee. In God I will **praise** his word, in God I have put my **trust**; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.”*
- **Psalm 118:5-6** *“I **called upon the LORD** in distress: the LORD answered me, and set me in a large place. The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?”*

2. Situational Anxiety

Situational Anxiety

- *Everyone* feels scared and is anxious sometimes.
- God designed our bodies to use anxiety to alert us to danger and to help us take action to protect ourselves/others. Think of the following examples:
 - You see a young child walk into the road and a car is coming.
 - You are walking in a park and see a rattlesnake.
 - You are in a bank and hear a gunshot.

- In these cases anxiety is a **God-given, natural response** to a situation and/or stimulus our brain interprets as threatening.
- Anxiety involves a reaction of **both** your body and mind.

Understanding Anxiety

Understanding How God Designed Our Bodies

Understanding the "Alarm" and "Calming" Systems in Our Bodies

- God created two separate, but related, systems in our body to help us in different situations.
- The "**Alarm System**" is designed to help us respond to something threatening to ourselves or others.
- The "**Calming System**" is designed to help us relax and quiet our minds and bodies.

10. Panic Anxiety
 9. High distress *Red Zone (7-10) = High Tension*
 8. Moderate distress
 7. Distress
-
6. High tension
 5. Unpleasant tension *Yellow Zone (4-6) = Caution*
 4. Tense
-
3. Relatively calm
 2. Relaxed *Green Zone (0-3) =*
Calm
 1. Calm
 0. Wonderfully calm

3. Anxiety Disorders

Anxiety Disorders

- Sometimes, anxiety gets out of hand and becomes so intense it interferes with daily functioning.
- When anxiety becomes difficult to manage, talk to someone who can direct you on how to get additional help.

Types of Anxiety Disorders

1. Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)
2. Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
3. Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
4. Panic Disorder
5. Social Anxiety Disorder
6. Phobias

Overcoming Stress, Worry, & Anxiety

Skills to Calm Your Spirit

- Seek first the Kingdom of God—focus on things that have eternal value rather than on things that only have meaning in this present life (*Matthew 6:33*).
- Pray and make your stress, worries, and requests known to God (*Phil. 4:6; 1 Peter 5:7; Psa. 118:5-6*).
- Think about the things listed in *Phil. 4:8*.
- Be attentive to Jesus' presence and hear his Word (*Luke 10:39*).
- Praise and worship God for who he is—someone worthy of our faith and trust (*Psalms 56:3-4*).

Skills to Calm Your Body

- Physical Exercise – research has shown aerobic exercise is particularly helpful for reducing anxiety sensitivity.
- Watch What You Eat – an example is reducing/eliminating caffeine.
- Practice Good Sleep Habits - go to bed and rise at consistent times, etc.
- Reduce/Eliminate Unnecessary Stress.
- Take Deep Breaths.
- Relax Your Muscles.

Skills to Calm Your Mind

- Learn to understand your self-talk (*Prov. 23:7*).
- Avoiding catastrophizing.
- Reviewing comforting Scriptures.
- Use calming/coping thoughts.
- Sit quietly and meditate on the Word and the Lord's peace.
- Use Biblical imagery (23rd Psalm) and the beauty of God's creation to focus your mind on Him.
- Listen to hymns and calming music.
- Reduce unnecessary noise and distractions in your home and work environment.