

Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog

Editor's Note: Content presented in the Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog is for awareness and informational purposes only, and it is not meant to be a diagnostic tool.

Part 2 of the topic Epilepsy and Anxiety

As you read through Part 2, keep in mind to always consult your healthcare professional regarding epilepsy and anxiety.

9. Sleep.

Adequate sleep is essential to all our health functions and especially true for keeping anxiety at bay. Without adequate sleep, anxiety quickly creeps in and takes over. Make sleep a priority by:

- only sleeping at night when you are tired.
- not reading or watching television in bed.
- not using your phone, tablet, or computer in bed.
- not tossing and turning in your bed if you cannot sleep; get up and go to another room until you feel sleepy.
- avoiding caffeine, large meals, and nicotine before bedtime.
- keeping your room dark and cool.
- writing down your worries before going to bed.
- going to sleep at the same time each night.

10. Meditation:

Meditation emphasizes relaxing the mind, techniques such as observing thoughts and emotions, and focusing on your breathing. A main goal of meditation is to remove chaotic thoughts from your mind and replace them with a sense of calm and mindfulness of the present moment.

Meditation is known for relieving stress and anxiety. Research from John Hopkins suggests 30 minutes of daily meditation may alleviate some anxiety symptoms and act as an antidepressant.

11. Time Management:

This approach addresses excessive demands within work and personal time. It involves techniques such as establishing priorities, using lists, notes and a diary, taking time for yourself and rewarding yourself for a job well done.

12. Assertiveness Training:

Assertiveness is an approach that helps you better communicate your feelings and needs, without aggression, in both personal and professional areas of your life. This technique also emphasizes the importance of listening to and respecting the other person or people in the discussion.

13. Improving Self-Esteem:

By becoming aware of the power of your own thoughts in creating your self-image, this technique builds up positive thought and reduces negative ones. It involves actively learning about yourself and taking more control of your life.

14. Ditch the Caffeine

If you have chronic anxiety, caffeine is not your friend. Caffeine may cause nervousness and jitters, neither of which is good if you are anxious. Research has shown caffeine may cause or worsen anxiety disorders. It may also cause panic attacks in people with panic disorder. In some people, eliminating caffeine may significantly improve anxiety symptoms.

15. Eat a healthy diet

Low blood sugar levels, dehydration, or chemicals in processed foods such as artificial flavorings, artificial colorings, and preservatives may cause mood changes in some people. A high-sugar diet may also impact temperament. If your anxiety worsens after eating, check your eating habits. Stay hydrated, eliminate processed foods, and eat a healthy diet rich in complex carbohydrates, fruits and vegetables, and lean proteins. **Be sure to consult a qualified**

healthcare professional regarding the healthy diet that is right for you.

16. Try aromatherapy

Aromatherapy uses fragrant essential oils to promote health and well-being. The oils may be inhaled directly or added to a warm bath or diffuser. Studies have shown that aromatherapy:

- helps you relax
- helps you sleep
- boosts mood
- reduces heart rate and blood pressure

Some essential oils used to relieve anxiety are:

- bergamot
- lavender
- clary sage
- grapefruit

17. Drink chamomile tea

A cup of chamomile tea is a common home remedy to calm frayed nerves and promote sleep. A 2009 study, Trusted Source showed chamomile may also be a powerful ally against generalized anxiety disorder. The study found people who took German chamomile capsules (220 milligrams up to five times daily) had a greater reduction in scores for tests that measure anxiety symptoms than those who were given a placebo.

18. Relaxing Bath

Hot water baths have relaxing properties that provide relief from anxiety and stress. It gives calm, reassuring feeling and has an analgesic effect. In a paper published in 1954, it was reported that patients felt relief from symptoms of anxiety and tension after a hot bath which helped relax their muscles.

19. Massage

Massaging your body, especially your neck, shoulders, back and the bottoms of your feet, can help a great deal in relaxing your body and relieving anxiety. Massaging is a very effective physical technique to reduce anxiety. A study published in the Journal of Caring Science in 2012 demonstrated that a gentle hand massage before an ophthalmic surgery increased patient comfort and reduced anxiety. Do not use relaxation techniques as a replacement for conventional care or to postpone seeing a doctor about a medical problem.

20. Integrative Behavioral Health – According to the **Anxiety and Depression Association of America website interest in** complementary and alternative medicine, or CAM, is growing

- Complementary medicine is used along with conventional medicine.
- Before beginning CAM or any type of treatment, talk to your mental health provider or primary care doctor.
- Acupuncture Evidence for the use of acupuncture — the Chinese practice of inserting needles into the body at specific points to manipulate the body's flow of energy — to treat anxiety disorders is becoming stronger.

21. Counselling

Counselling is a talking therapy that involves a trained therapist listening to you and helping you find ways to deal with emotional issues. This can be helpful if your anxiety is related to not knowing when your seizures might happen. And counselling can help if you feel isolated because of your seizures. Epilepsy Alliance Ohio has excellent Counselors.

22. Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)

CBT can help you to manage your problems by changing the way you think and behave. It helps you to understand the links between your thoughts, feelings, and behavior. This can help you to manage your problems in a more positive way. CBT is usually provided by a trained therapist, but psychiatric nurses and social workers may also be able to do this. CBT is also available through online courses. **Your family doctor may be able to arrange for you to do a CBT course through the NHS, or you can pay privately to do one.** Epilepsy Alliance Ohio offers free counseling services. We have excellent counselors at Epilepsy Alliance Ohio - Patty Trotta (Patty.Trotta@epilepsy-ohio.org) and Doug Simmons (Doug.Simmons@epilepsy-ohio.org) are located at the Epilepsy Alliance Ohio office in downtown Cincinnati, Ohio.

Other things you can do.

- Distract yourself. It is almost impossible to think about negative thoughts and feel jittery when you are busy doing something. Actively engage in healthy or productive activities like watching a good film, playing a game, or doing something that needs your full attention, so your nervousness starts to wane out.
- Imagine the stop sign. Visualize a huge stop sign the moment you realize you are starting to have anxious thoughts again. The stop sign will signal your mind to stop. You can also tell yourself “STOP.”
- Allow yourself some worry time. Set aside a few minutes each day to worry about things, making sure to do it only at that time. As you do this regularly, you will start worrying less throughout the day. By allowing yourself to be anxious for just a brief time, you can begin to learn to control your mind to worry less.
- Network with others. Talking to other people more can give you that sense of being “normal” again. It can also help you find more solutions to your problem. At the same time, you are overcoming your fear of talking to people so start reaching out to others more.
- Learn to sit still. If you often find yourself moving about from a panic attack or an anxiety episode, try your best to be calm and stay where you are. Use some relaxation techniques such as deep breathing to feel more at ease. It may feel that the anxiety is getting worse each second, but by sitting still and breathing in and out, you can set your mind and body to relax more. Learning how to do this technique regularly can also make

you feel more confident and prepared the next time you come face to face again with anxiety.

- Learn more about anxiety. Knowing more about your condition can give you a better understanding of what you are dealing with. Indeed, it is difficult to fight a battle that you do not really understand. Educate yourself by reading books or even watching videos about anxiety.

You can deal with anxiety without medication. No matter how long you have been living with anxiety, there are things you can do to help control it. Use the ideas above to help you feel calmer and happier on a regular basis, be sure to always include a qualified healthcare professional in your conversations. Soon you will realize that it is YOU who is in control and not your anxiety. **Before making any decision about how to best manage anxiety, always check with your healthcare professional.**

Remember that treatment success varies. Some people respond to treatment after a few weeks or months while others may take longer. If people have more than one anxiety disorder or if they suffer from other co-existing conditions, treatment may take longer.

I will keep researching this topic. As I find new and updated information, I will put it into another edition of the blog.

Editor's Note: The Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog will be distributed and posted weekly.
Always remember – **CARPE DIEM – SEIZE THE DAY!**