



Understanding Anxiety

What it is, why it's common, and what actually helps

1 in 3

U.S. adults will experience an anxiety disorder at some point in their life.

Source: NIMH

1 in 5

U.S. adults experienced an anxiety disorder in the past year alone.

Source: NIMH

What Anxiety Actually Is

Anxiety is your brain's built-in threat-detection system (amygdala, cortisol, adrenaline) — designed to protect you, not to torment you.

Everyday anxiety (before a test, a first date) is normal and fades quickly. An anxiety disorder is when it's frequent, intense, or shows up without a clear trigger and disrupts daily life.

Common Types of Anxiety

Generalized Anxiety

Chronic, wide-ranging worry that's hard to switch off.

Social Anxiety

Intense fear of judgment or embarrassment in social situations.

Panic Disorder

Sudden, intense episodes of fear — panic attacks — that peak quickly.

Phobias

A strong, specific fear of a particular thing or situation.

Myths vs. Facts

MYTH

"You're just overreacting."

"Just calm down and it'll stop."

"Something is wrong with you."

"Anxiety is something I will have to manage forever."

FACT

It's a real neurobiological response, not a character flaw.

The threat-detection system doesn't switch off on command.

It's the most common mental health experience — you're in the majority.

Wrong! You can overcome this by finding solutions to getting the brain to regulate and not react in old patterns.

When to Reach Out for Support

If anxiety is frequent, intense, or interfering with daily life, sleep, or relationships, and receiving treatments that truly work to solve the problem is a sign of strength, not failure.

US: Call or text 988 (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline) — free, confidential, available 24/7.

This guide is educational and not a substitute for professional medical or mental health care.