

FACING ANXIETY

Worried all the time?
So was I. Then I
learned I didn't have
to face it alone.



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In my first week of junior high, my math teacher asked me to complete an equation in front of the class. Simple enough, right? Well, I couldn't do it. Frightening thoughts raced through my mind. My heart pounded, I started sweating, my muscles tensed up, and I had difficulty breathing. I wanted to run away, but I felt trapped and afraid. For most of the year, I felt this way the moment I stepped inside the school each morning.

These kinds of feelings lasted all through high school. I worried about *everything*. Taking tests, meeting new people, speaking in public, going on dates, and competing in sports all made me feel uneasy. I worried about the future, and I feared I would never be good enough to face life's challenges. I felt nervous and on edge much of the time, which made it hard for me to just get through a day.

ANXIETY VS. ANXIETY DISORDERS

Everyone experiences feelings of anxiety from time to time. It's a normal reaction to new, unfamiliar, or challenging situations. If we never worried about anything, something would be wrong. A little anxiety can motivate us to take action and solve problems. But sometimes anxiety can be intense and persistent and can interfere with daily life. These can be signs of an anxiety disorder.

There are different types of anxiety disorders, but typically they include excessive feelings of fear and nervousness. Physical symptoms can include rapid heart-beat, tenseness, shortness of breath, dizziness, and a lack of ability to concentrate and relax. Fearful thinking, self-doubt, worry, and stress can trigger these symptoms. Genetics and an imbalance in brain chemistry can also contribute to anxiety disorders.

The anxiety I felt was intense, and when the feelings came, all I wanted to do was avoid them. After a while, I noticed I was avoiding situations at school, with my friends, and even at church. Anxiety was controlling my life. I began feeling weak and too fragile to handle life's ups and downs. I realized that I needed help with this challenge.

Sure enough, I was diagnosed with an anxiety disorder. I had a hard time dealing with it at first, but with the support of my family and others, I've learned a lot. I've learned that an anxiety disorder doesn't mean I lack character or I'm weak. It's like having high blood pressure or diabetes. It's treatable and something that needs to be worked on—not something to be ashamed of. Yes, I have an anxiety disorder, but I also have hope.



Here are some things I've learned that help me to **CALM ANXIETY:**



1

When anxious thoughts and feelings come, **stop what you're doing for a while, sit still, close your eyes, and breathe deeply.** Fill your mind with calming and peaceful thoughts.



2

Good nutrition, rest, and exercise really help our physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.



3

Pay close attention to what you're thinking. Fearful, negative, doubtful, unrealistic, or self-critical thoughts can trigger anxiety. Make a commitment to **focus on healthy, positive, and realistic thinking.**

4



Talk to someone who can help, such as a parent or another trusted adult. If anxiety is severe enough, it may need to be treated with medication and therapy, and that's OK. It's not a sign of weakness or personal failure to get the help you need.

5

Turn to actions that bring the Spirit into your life. Pray specifically for calm feelings. Count your blessings. Read scriptures that bring you peace, hope, and strength. Remember that Heavenly Father loves you and that “the worth of souls is great in the sight of God” (D&C 18:10). This means you have great worth. With this knowledge, believe in yourself and face your fears and challenges with faith. Move forward with confidence and do your best.



Learn More

For more on this subject, see Lyle J. Burrup, “Anxiety and Anxiety Disorders,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2017, 54.

THE LORD WILL BE WITH YOU

I thought at first that there would be this one thing I could do that would make my anxiety go away forever. I prayed, fasted, and read my scriptures daily. I hoped that I would find permanent relief, but it never came. The treatment and assistance I've received have helped me learn that it takes persistence and patience to learn how to manage and cope with anxiety. I'm still learning, and I still struggle with anxiety from time to time.

The Apostle Paul also had a problem that wouldn't go away. He described it as “a thorn in the flesh” (see 2 Corinthians 12:7). He asked the Lord several times to take it from him, but the Lord didn't. Through it all, Paul learned an important lesson. “My strength is made perfect

in weakness,” he said. “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Paul learned to rely on the Lord through his challenges. Like Paul, I needed to be willing to place my burdens on the Lord. He loves us and wants to help us. He said, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). When we hand our fears and frustrations to Him, He will help us emotionally and spiritually. “I will not leave you comfortless,” the Savior said. “I will come to you” (John 14:18). Receiving His comfort in my hour of need is one thing I know I'll never have to worry about. **NE**