



WOMEN'S THERAPY
— **INSTITUTE** —

Helping Women and Girls Feel Better

Feel More Relaxed
— *in One Minute* —



Why does anxiety happen?

We humans are a fairly intelligent species but our brains are slow to evolve. Our brain naturally seeks safety and wants us to survive. **When we encounter a threat, our brains go into a “survival mode” aka the “3F’s”.** The 3F’s are fight, flight and freeze. 3F’s is a way for us to stay alive so we can either pummel (fight), run (flight) or hide from (freeze) the wooly mammoth that’s trying to eat us.

Usually our brains are able to calm down after the threat so we can go about our day but it’s hard for some to calm down. When we cannot calm down, we constantly worry about the next wooly even when the wooly is nowhere near us. That’s a brief history of anxiety.

What does Anxiety look like?

Sometimes our slow-evolved brains have a hard time telling the difference between stress and actual threat. **It’s safe to say that nowadays there is no wooly mammoth chasing after us but our brains don’t know better.** Most people view stress as some unpleasant threat; that means we still go into the 3F’s and feel anxious with modern-day non-threatening stressors such as getting tasks done, worrying about what others think, etc.

A person with anxiety tend to overthink and feel overwhelmed to the point that it’s hard to eat, sleep and do other daily functions. Over time, they may even have various health problems because of the anxiety. They may also snap at others (fight), avoid people or things (flight) or withdraw (freeze). With that being said, **it’s not uncommon for you to feel agitated, angry, or even feeling “blah” when you are anxious.**

Is it my fault that I have anxiety?

No. Some people are easy-go-lucky, and some people worry easily. **We are all different individuals, have different genetic make-up and personalities and therefore respond to stress differently.** It’s like some people are born with longer legs and can jump higher; we are all just made differently.

What can I do to feel more relaxed in one minute?

When we feel stressed and go into the 3F's, we tend to breathe too shallow or too fast to get more oxygen so we can fight harder, run faster and hide better. One calming method is to slow down the breathing. **Try taking very slow, very deliberate breaths.** Take 4 seconds to breathe in. Hold for 2 seconds. Then breathe out for 6 to 7 seconds. This will help you regain some of your carbon dioxide while still allowing you to breathe comfortably.

So let's try slowing your breath now. It may be easier to follow a clock if you are new at this. Practice makes habit. Count slowly in your mind with every inhale, hold and exhale. It's easier to remember this by name: **4-2-6 Breathing.**

Inhale 1-2-3-4 (seconds)

Hold 1-2 (seconds)

Exhale 1-2-3-4-5-6 (seconds)

Try this for one minute. Repeat if necessary. The best thing about this breathing technique is that you can do it even in the middle of the task. The most effective is to practice it right before going to bed to slow your mind down.

What else can I do?

If slow breathing is hard for you, or if you have a medical condition that makes breathing difficult or if you want to find more ways to ease your anxiety, consider talking to a licensed therapist or a qualified health professional who is experienced in anxiety. **A good therapist is able to listen, help you understand your thinking pattern, teach relaxation techniques, and tailor a therapeutic plan that best fits you.** The first session is usually paperwork and getting to know each other, so give it a few sessions before deciding whether the therapist is right for you.

While nobody's life is completely worry-free, but anxiety can be manageable and it doesn't have to control your whole life. You don't need to do this alone. Contact **Women's Therapy Institute** today!

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