

# about anxiety

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## you need to know

Anxiety is a common feeling usually described as “uneasiness” or “apprehension.” At one time or another, everyone experiences anxiety. It is highly treatable and manageable.

The feeling of anxiety has been described with many different words. Here are some of them:

stress	edginess	apprehension	the jitters
worry	jumpiness	nervousness	the shakes
fear	butterflies	uneasiness	freaking out
panic	disquiet	agitation	angst

While everyone experiences anxiety, some of us feel it more often, some more deeply, some less frequently, and some less intensely. Your own experience of anxiety will depend on:

1. Genetics—how your parents, grandparents, and ancestors experienced anxiety
2. Brain chemistry—the type, amount, and movement of the chemicals working in your brain
3. Life events—the situations you are faced with in your life
4. Personality—how you look at and interpret things that happen to you

Genetics, brain chemistry, and life events are factors that you have little or no control over. Your personality, or the way you perceive and handle life events, is something you have a great deal of control over—probably more than you realize. For that reason, most of the activities in this book will focus on working with your personality, helping you to understand the way you look at and respond to life and suggesting ways to do it that will help you to lower your anxiety level.

activity 1 \* about anxiety

directions

Your closest ancestors are your mother, father, grandparents, and great-grandparents on both sides of your family. In person, by phone, or in writing, interview as many of these people as you can. Ask them the following questions and record their answers on separate sheets of paper.

1. Which of the following words would you use to describe anxiety? (Read or show them the list on the preceding page.)
2. Would you describe yourself as a highly anxious, moderately anxious, or rarely anxious person, and why?
3. Explain how you experience the feeling of anxiety in your body, mind, and emotions.
4. Explain what you do to manage anxiety when you feel it.
5. Describe how any or all of your responses may have changed over the course of your life.

Now ask yourself the same questions and record your answers here:

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_  
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## more to do

Look back over the answers to your relatives' interview questions. Describe any patterns you see in the answers.

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How do your relatives' answers compare to your answers?

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What, if anything, do you better understand about yourself in relation to anxiety by having learned about your relatives?

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