

# 5 how you experience anxiety

## for you to know

The way you experience anxiety may be different from the way your friend or relative experiences it. Increasing your awareness of how you experience anxiety can help you to manage it.

Marcus, Danielle, and Emily all experience “test anxiety.” Whenever they have a big test coming up in school, they start to feel very anxious. Even though all three of them have this reaction, they all experience anxiety in different ways.

Marcus always has a hard time sleeping for a couple of nights before a test. He finds it hard to fall asleep because his mind is racing with thoughts about the subject he has been studying, the facts he is trying to memorize, what he thinks the essay questions will be, whether he studied enough, and whether he studied the right materials. Even when he finally falls asleep, he wakes up frequently and often dreams about being late for class on the day of the test or not knowing any of the answers.

Danielle has no trouble sleeping before a test, but she tends to get “knots” in her stomach. She doesn’t have much of an appetite because the muscles in her stomach area feel very tight, which prevents her from feeling hunger pangs. She has to force herself to eat tiny meals or snacks even though she’s not hungry, because if she doesn’t eat she gets light-headed.

Emily experiences test anxiety as an overall nervousness. She finds it hard to concentrate and has a constant sense of uneasiness. She tends to get lost in her thoughts and feels jumpy or antsy. She notices that her heart seems to beat a little faster and her breathing is shallower during the morning of a test.

Recognizing their anxiety helps Marcus, Danielle, and Emily know what is happening when they feel these symptoms. They realize that they are nervous about the

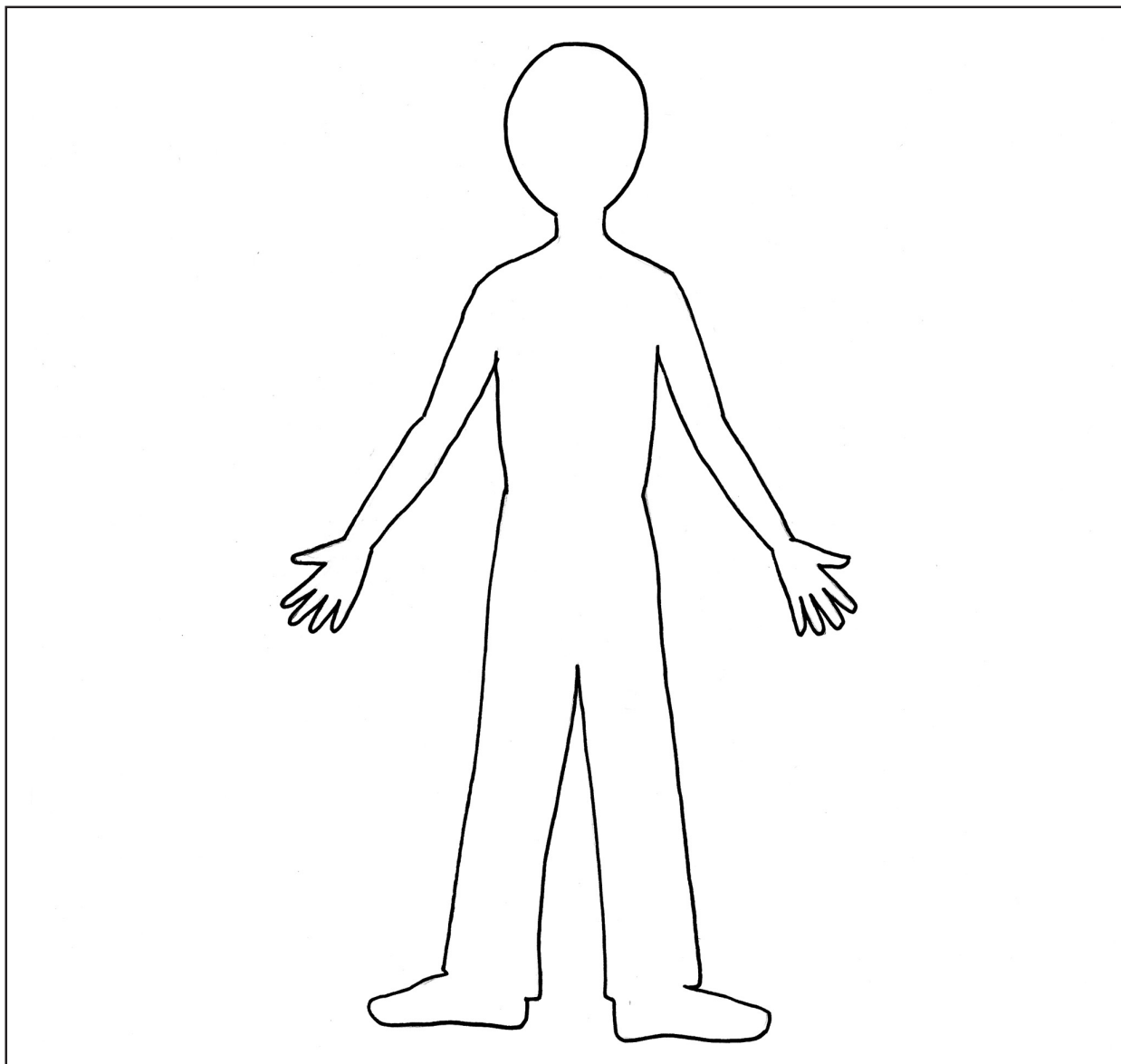
## activity 5 \* how you experience anxiety

upcoming test. The earlier they notice their reactions, the sooner they can practice relaxation techniques to help alleviate these symptoms and keep them from getting worse. If they don't take care of themselves early enough, Marcus might fall asleep during the test, Danielle would have trouble thinking of the answers because her brain isn't getting enough nutrition, and Emily could be too distracted to be able to complete the test in the time allowed.

## activity 5 \* how you experience anxiety

### directions

Think about the ways you experience anxiety. In the picture below, make notes or marks on the parts of the body where you feel anxiety symptoms. Use different colors, textures, lines, or shading to help express your feelings more precisely.



## more to do

Were you able to remember what anxiety feels like for you? If not, pay attention to how you experience anxiety over the next week, and then repeat this exercise when you have more information about yourself.

What was it like trying to show your feelings in the picture?

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When you look back at your body outline again, what are your thoughts and feelings about how you experience anxiety?

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According to the picture, where and how do you feel anxiety the most?

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How do you think noticing your symptoms when they first begin might be helpful for you?

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