

5 counseling tips to reduce anxiety

Pray

Anxiety reveals where our hearts are struggling to trust the Lord. The antidote to this is *talking with our loving Father* and choosing to trust in His promises. Scripture tells us to cast our anxieties onto Him because He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7) and as we do this in prayer we find God's peace beginning to guard our heart and mind (Philippians 4:4-8).

Practice good sleep hygiene

God put a 24-hour circadian rhythm clock in our bodies. Respect your need for quality rest. *Establish a bedtime routine* by turning down lights and devices an hour before bed and allowing for an average of 7-8 hours of sleep a night. *Sunshine* signals to the hypothalamus to wake up and secrete various hormones and studies have shown that getting outside in the sun early in the morning can assist with falling asleep faster in the evening when natural melatonin production begins.

Practice mindfulness.

Engage in a mindful walk when you are feeling anxious. Notice your breathing and any sensations in your body. Pay attention to what you see and hear around you. What is happening in this God-given moment? This strengthens our relaxation response.

Nourish your body.

Often anxiety and stress can either increase or decrease our appetite. What we eat fuels our brains, bodies and emotions. *Focus on eating nutrient dense foods* - think food located on the outside edges of a grocery store - and pay attention to how what you eat may be impacting your mood, energy and sleep.

Stay connected.

When we feel overwhelmed it can be tempting to isolate and pull away from community. But God has made us for relationships. We need each other to remind ourselves of truth when we are struggling to feel and believe it. *Reach out to a trusted* family or church member to ask for prayer and encouragement or set up a counseling appointment in order to process your thoughts and emotions with a counselor.