

How to use this report

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While it is not difficult to recognize a time when we are feeling anxious, it can be far more challenging to determine the root cause of that anxiety and, consequently, how to resolve it. The goal of this guide is to make the process of self-discovery easier and have you back on track more quickly. As a quick reference, below is a summary of the likely causes of anxiety for you.

What may cause your anxiety level to increase includes:

- when others around you are extreme in their behavior and hard for you to tolerate
- people who are overly emotional or moody
- people who are focused on rules at the expense of logic
- people who become bossy and care only about results and not about people

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The following is a more detailed list of potential sources of anxiety, along with tips that will help address the cause. Not everything on the list will be relevant in any given situation. Use this as a guide to analyze where your anxiety may be coming from so that you can begin to craft a solution that will reduce your stress.

- You need opportunities to blow off steam when things get stressful and your anxiety could increase if you think that people don't understand how you feel about what's happening.

Find a safe place to vent your feelings rather than to expect everyone to be responsive to your emotional reactions. It's not that they don't care, they show it by doing something practical.

- Your need for clarity about your direction can cause you to become assertive with other people who are trying to make you do what they want you to do.

If you're not getting clarity, focus on incremental steps: for example, "What am I going to do today?" rather than "What am I going to do with my life?" This will help you create a sense of direction for yourself.

Anxiety: Sources and Solutions

Anne Auld

- Your need for a clear, well organized plan can become a source of anxiety when life gets chaotic and unpredictable.

Take time to organize just the simple things as a way to feel more control, while you wait for the big picture to unfold.

- Your anxiety may increase when you feel pressured to make a decision, especially important ones that don't have easy answers.

If you feel you are being forced to make a decision, try simplifying your options into a few choices that will point to an acceptable answer. Remember, it's OK to go for the 80% solution.

- Your need for variety in your tasks can cause you to worry about being offered only routine assignments that you find boring.

Find a way to build in time for some "surprise" activities. Bring variety to your work: break up the day by making a short phone call to someone you haven't talked with in a while, or by switching back and forth between tasks.

- Rules and processes that try to make you conform can feel suffocating to you. You like being different than other people and don't want to have to play by someone else's rules.

There is a cost in social capital to being different from other people, so be selective about pushing back on the system if you're to avoid more oversight of your actions. Express your uniqueness where it won't matter.

- When things get difficult, you may worry that you're not going to be able to rise to the moment. It's true that you typically don't hesitate to tackle difficult tasks, but this may lead you to take on more than is reasonable.

As hard as it may be, focus on the positive aspects of what you're doing, rather than the flaws. The chances are that others will be easier on you than you are on yourself. Learn to value your achievements; don't talk them down.

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- If your work has no practical result, it can cause you to feel anxious. You prefer to produce something tangible. Your need to do hands-on tasks will inevitably be challenged when there is nothing to work on.

Tackle some delayed home project as a way to offset the frustration that can occur when work activity slows down. Take on tasks that you can finish, so you can feel satisfaction when you check it off your "to do" list.

- When things become chaotic and unpredictable, you can become anxious: it can seem that there is no order to anything. Dis-organization, even with simple things, may trigger a feeling of instability.

Make sure you spend time at the beginning of each day to tidy things up and to create some order in your world. If you're working at home, carve out a physical space that is just yours, so you can keep it organized the way you want. This can help you towards a more balanced view of things.