17 'Small,' but Significant, Lifestyle Changes That Help People With Anxiety

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While it's easy — and understandable — to roll your eyes when someone offers a "miracle cure" for your anxiety (*Yes! I have tried yoga! Thanks for asking!!*), it's also important to acknowledge this truth: There are day-to-day changes you can make that might help you manage your anxiety.

We're not talking about a miracle cure. We're not saying breathing on a mat will make your problems go away. It's just important to remember while you're rolling your eyes that you're *not* helpless in this fight. While something that worked for one person might not work for you, that doesn't mean nothing works for you — or that daily, destructive anxiety is inevitable.

Of course, that being said, anxiety will still happen, and when it rears its ugly head, it's not your fault. It doesn't mean you didn't "try hard enough." But for some of us, a slight change or tweak in our routine can at least make the fall a little softer, and the anxiety a bit more manageable. Making small changes also doesn't replace seeing a therapist or taking medication, if that's what you need. It's just important to know there are options out there.

Here's what they shared with us:

1. Making Your Bed Every Morning

"I make my bed in the morning. That way I start my day feeling like I've already accomplished something. Also, no matter how bad the day is, I have something nice to come home to." — Clarissa L.

2. Keeping Your Phone on Silent

"I keep my phone on silent. I never realized how much anxiety came from sudden phone calls or texts I wasn't expecting. It doesn't help that 9/10 times it's a text that causes me more anxiety/drama/stress." — Kathryn W

3. Opening Up to Others About Your Anxiety

"Being really open and honest with everyone that I have severe anxiety. When it's really bad, I'm more open about it rather than hiding. I also draw a little smiley face on my wrist every day and make myself think a happy thought each time I see it!" — Cherokee M.

"Nightly check ins with my boyfriend. It helps to discuss the day and talk about what's bothering me and the positive and negative things that happened. Helps set me up for sleep. Thank goodness he's understanding and so patient with me when my anxiety becomes overwhelming for me." — Monica T.

"I've informed people of my anxiety and have told them I need to leave the area for a reason and to please don't take it personally, and please give me my space." — Bailey S.

4. Spending Less Time on Social Media/Limiting Screen Time

"Temporary Facebook breaks by uninstalling the app. I can still browse through the mobile site, but it's more inconvenient and makes me less likely to spend hours on there." — Randi D.

"I limit my social media. It seemed my anxiety would rise every time I went on, because I was comparing my life to everyone's highlight reel and it was doing a number on my self-esteem." — Jen S.

"I try my best not to reach for my phone first thing in the morning. It's not easy when it's the alarm going off, but I turn it off and then I reach for my dogs. I try to spend a few minutes cuddling with them before I do anything else, like check my emails or Facebook. Before reality gets a chance to get in, I give my girls a chance to get their love in. They are far more important and loving them sets a better tone for my day." — Nicole R.

"Having complete days where I switch off. No phone, internet or leaving the house. Ultimate recharge, in my place of security and serenity, without distractions." — Capri B.

5. Saying "No"

"Being honest and telling people *no*. Saying 'maybe' doesn't help… I'm telling you no for a reason, respect that and don't come back at me for it. I'm trying my best, but I have my limits on what I can do. If I can do it I *will* do it." — Saige D.

6. Using Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Techniques (a.k.a. Jedi Mind Tricks)

"I basically do a Jedi mind trick on myself. (Being a nerd helps with my anxiety too lol.) Here's how it works: I try to objectively reflect on and assess my day. For example, I'll think about what happened that day and rate how good the day was. *However*, I have to be able to provide 'evidence' from the day to back up my rating. Since anxiety convinces me I had a crappy day, when I make my day concrete by reflecting on the specific goals I did meet and the specific things I did accomplish and the specific little surprises that were positive, I see it was actually a good day. My attitude towards the day improves. It's cut down on how often I claim I had a crappy day. I can tell if it was just the anxiety or actually a crappy day. If it was just the anxiety, reflecting has helped me see anxiety was lying and my memory of the day becomes positive. I guess it's a type of daily gratitude practice. I even have an app that I can use to track how I rated my days so I can see patterns and I can visually see that I actually have more good days than bad ones."
— Jessica R.

7. Starting a Mindfulness Practice

"Yoga and meditation! Mindfulness is really helpful, it helps you stay in the present moment. also focusing on my breathing, deep breaths. They help me stay grounded."
— Eirenne E.

"Gratitude and mindfulness have worked really well and after being repeatedly told in therapy this works, I hesitantly tried it out. And it does work. Anxiety is often so future-focused about what may or may not happen. Mindfulness and gratitude keep you in the moment and help you appreciate what you already have. For example, every morning on my way to work, I have a gratitude mindfulness exercise. I notice the sunrise and appreciate it beauty, different colors, textures, etc. In that moment, I am not worried about work that day or remembering something that didn't go well the day before. It is just me and the sunrise." — Alyssa P.

"I've taken up meditation. I decided to download a few guided meditation sessions and I now meditate twice a day. My first is a general session in the morning, and at night it's a session about whatever bothered me throughout the day. It helps a lot." — Brianna N.

8. Writing Down Your Schedule/To-Do List

"I have a daily planner, but I also use a chalkboard wall, sticky notes and an app on my phone to make reminders and notes of encouragement more visible. It's one of the best things I've done to cope with both anxiety and ADHD." — Kami L.

9. Working Out

"The gym. Mostly on the treadmill or the bikes. Simple but slow workouts. I do it early in the a.m. If I start having an episode, walking or running in place helps." — Jordan S.

10. Practicing Acceptance

"Accepting this as part of who I am. It allows me to step back when needed, totally guilt-free. Also letting go of how it makes others feel, guilt-free. It doesn't change the level of anxiety, it only takes away the guilt of having it." — Kathi F.

11. Cutting Toxic People/Things Out of Your Life

"I dropped all the toxic people in my life. Block. Delete. So simple. I unfollowed all the news and political pages on Twitter and Facebook. Life is so much better being a little selfish and putting my needs first. You can't pour from an empty cup. As bitchy and heartless as I may sound, I'm actually able to love and care for those who actually care about me better after getting rid of the draining relationships." — Naoko P.

"Cutting out people who are negative and bring me down not just on social media but I've had to tell former friends I'm *done*. It was hard when there was still so much there, but the constant disappointment was not worth it."– Allison M.

"I remove all toxic people from my life. And I try to avoid encounters with people like that as often as I can. The biggest change I've made is breaking up with the most toxic ex-boyfriend I've ever had and getting out of the most toxic relationship I have ever been in. Reminding myself to breathe every day is extremely important. Relax. And to remember that things take time." — Jessa P.

12. Establishing a Bedtime Routine

"I've established a bedtime routine. May sound silly, but after brushing teeth, etc., I wash my hands with a lavender soap. And use a good smell on my hands. Then climb into bed and take a few deep breaths. While repeating my mantra, 'You are physically, mentally, emotionally safe. The world is not out to get you. Nothing is as bad as it seems.' It really helps me." — Niki T.

"I get everything I need for the day ready the night before so I don't have to think too early in the morning. I also make my bed before I leave in the morning which is great because coming home after a long day to a made bed is fantastic. My room stays neat and clean which helps keep my mind at ease." — Alexis H.

"I write down all the things I need to do the next day before I go to bed. It helps me fall asleep because I'm less worried about forgetting a responsibility." — Maisie B.

13. Journaling

"I keep a journal now to track what was happening when I began to feel myself getting overwhelmed. Inside the cover is a list of grounding techniques. This helps me track my triggers and find ways to cope/avoid those situations." — Megan K.

14. Finding Something to Do With Your Hands

"I take my crochet with me everywhere I go now. It helps me while I sit and talk to people. Even if I'm not talking to someone, it can help bring a great conversation starter and helps ease my tension, as I keep my hands busy." — Tatauq M.

15. Cutting Out Caffeine

"I've cut the majority of caffeine from my life. I stick to herbal tea, and occasionally will have a green tea or decaf coffee. Since this change, I've had significantly fewer panic attacks." — Ashley S.

"Cut out caffeine and drink more water. I was told by a therapist that it would help and it does. I noticed without the caffeine I don't feel as anxious. Not only does it help with my anxiety, but I know I'm hydrated." — Amanda W.

"I quit caffeine! Not having that extra jolt when I get anxious has really helped keep my panic levels lower. Yes, it was hard — but worth it!" — Polly B.

16. Giving Yourself Time in the Morning to Prepare for the Day

"Giving myself enough time in the morning to prepare for the day. It has made a huge difference in being able to have the right mindset before leaving the house."
— Stephanie Q.

"I wake up an hour earlier to get some alone and free time in my home before everyone else wakes up." — Alicia H.

17. Practicing Gratitude

"Listing three things I'm thankful for every day (no repeats, if I'm thankful for the sun one day then I can't say that ever again) and going on a walk." — Crystal G.

"When I think something negative, I have to stop and think of something I am grateful for. Example — I got a flat tire and I would've normally been upset, but I remembered I had the foresight to get AAA two years ago because I was scared about something happening. I said thank you to my anxiety because now I was covered. Sounds weird but it works."
— Karri H.

Is there a small change that's made a huge impact on your life? Tell us about it in the comments below.