Understanding Anxiety and Stress

# Sources of Anxiety and Stress

## Uncertainty

* About the future
* Job change
* Starting or ending relationships
* About identity

## Disconnection

* Social isolation
* Geographic distance from loved ones
* Religious or spiritual

## Trauma or Loss

* Death of a loved one
* Natural disasters
* Victim of a crime
* Abuse or assault

## Competence

* Academic
* Family or cultural
* Job-related
* Can I do this?

## Interpersonal

* Are they judging me?
* Will they like me?
* Are they disappointed, hurt, or angry with me?

# Types of Anxiety

## Panic Attack

* An acute episode of fear that seems to occur without a cause. Symptoms can include dizziness, racing heart, or sweating.

## Agoraphobia

* Anxiety about places from which escape might be difficult or embarrassing if you suddenly have a panic attack.

## Social Phobia

* Fear of humiliation where you are exposed to scrutiny. Typically there is concern about being judged as weak or stupid.

## Specific Phobia

* A strong fear or avoidance of an object or situation. Example: Animal phobia, fear of heights, or airplane phobia.

## Generalized Anxiety Disorder

* Chronic anxiety that involves worrying about several stressful life circumstances.

## Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

* A need to repeat behaviors or rituals to dispel anxiety caused by recurring thoughts, images, or impulses.

## Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

* Chronic anxiety, nightmares, and flashbacks after a severe trauma such as war, assault, or a car accident.

# Signs of Stress

## Physical Symptoms

* Headaches, migraines, high blood pressure
* Muscle tension
* Sleep/eating (too little or too much)

## Feelings

* Anxiety
* Depression
* Anger

## Actions

* Increased use of alcohol and smoking
* Withdrawing, less productivity/satisfaction
* Family members stressed

## Thoughts

* My life is over
* Nothing is going to ever work out
* I am going to flunk out of school

# Tips for Lowering Stress and Anxiety

## Pleasurable Activities

* Listen to music
* Exercise
* Read
* Do things with people you like

## Take Care of Your Body

* Avoid too much caffeine or alcohol
* Eat healthy food
* Get enough sleep
* Exercise

## Time Management

* Prioritize
* Don’t take on too much
* Know your limits

## Maintain Perspective

* Examine your thoughts for unhelpful/incorrect thoughts
* Then substitute with correct/helpful ones

## Communication Skills: Getting Along with Others

* Listen more
* Don’t be passive
* Don’t be aggressive
* Be assertive

## Laugh

* Watch funny movies or TV
* Look at the lighter side of life
* Have fun
* Play

## Relaxation

* Yoga
* Imagine pleasant scenes
* Listen to music
* Read
* Meditate

## Talk to Others

* Talk to friends, family
* UHCL Counseling Services
  + 281-283-2580
  + [www.uhcl.edu/counselingservices](http://www.uhcl.edu/counselingservices)

# Health Conditions that Can Contribute to Anxiety and Stress

## Thyroid Imbalance

* The thyroid helps regulate body temperature and metabolic rate. An overly active thyroid gland may increase anxiety.

## Candidiasis or “yeast syndrome”

* Too much yeast in the intestinal or genitourinary tract, may produce anxiety symptoms.

## Insomnia

* Lack of sleep is the most common factor that increases anxiety. Most need 7 to 8 hours of sleep/night.

## Premenstrual Syndrome

* Women may experience an increase in anxiety and panic reactions prior to menstruation.

## Body Toxicity

* Consuming pesticides in food, ingesting chemicals, and exposure to pollutants can increase anxiety.

## Adrenal Exhaustion

* Chronic stress can tax the adrenal system making it harder for your body to regulate emotions.