**The Science of Anxiety**

The decision-making area of your brain determines the existence of a threat. This triggers a response in the amygdala, which tells the hypothalamus to initiate the fight-or-flight response.

When Anxiety Persists

Anxiety disorders are the most commonly diagnosed mental illness in the U.S. There are several major types of anxiety disorders. The most common is generalized anxiety disorder. Symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder include feeling nervous, having trouble sleeping and experiencing excessive worrying.

**Neurotransmitters are responsible for communicating to various parts of the brain.**

- **Serotonin**: Responsible for mood, sleep and appetite
- **Norepinephrine**: Linked to alertness and attention
- **GABA**: Slows down signals

**You might experience:**

- **Rapid heart rate and breathing**: Oxygen fuels a rapid response.
- **Pale or flushed skin**: Blood flow is reduced.
- **Tense muscles**: This helps you prepare for the perceived threat.

**The limbic system, comprised of the hippocampus, amygdala, hypothalamus and thalamus, is responsible for a majority of emotional processing in the brain. Scientists have found individuals with anxiety disorders have more activity in the limbic system.**

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**The Science Behind How to Cope With Anxiety**

- **Cognitive behavioral therapy** helps individuals learn coping patterns.
- **Exercise decreases stress hormones.**
- **Caffeine can trigger anxiety.**
- **Meditation can help manage anxiety.**
- **Processed food can make you feel sad.**
- **Alcohol can stimulate anxiety.**
- **Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) help block reabsorption of serotonin into neurons.**
- **Serotonin and norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs) block serotonin and norepinephrine absorption.**
- **Benzodiazepines provide fast-acting relief by acting as a muscle relaxant.**
- **Mindfulness practices include yoga, meditation and breathing exercises.**

**Medicine**

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