

5 Anxiety-Inducing Habits ^[1]

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In order to live a peaceful life and avoid dealing with certain mood disorders, like social anxiety, you have to make a lifestyle change. Habits like smoking, drinking or simply wasting time, should definitely be excluded from your daily routine.

Although bad habits are not always the cause of social anxiety, they make you vulnerable to all kinds of mood disorders. Here are the 5 habits that you should definitely avoid, if you're dealing with an anxiety disorder.

1. Lack of Sleep

Lack of sleep, which is fairly common to anxiety disorders, plays a key role in excessive worrying. Studies have shown that, if you don't get enough sleep, you'll wake up in a bad mood which in turn will affect your entire day. After a bad night's sleep, most people experience a lack of focus and energy. Those who are dealing with social anxiety might notice a significant raise in negative thoughts. In the long run, sleep difficulties may contribute to mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety. Here are some useful tips for a good night's sleep:

- Go to bed and wake up at the same hour, even during the weekend.
- Avoid coffee, chocolate, energy drinks and other caffeinated drinks, after 5pm.
- Keep your bedroom free of any devices such as smartphones, TV's, tablets or laptops.
- Read a book or meditate before you go to sleep.

2. Smoking

People smoke for all kinds of reasons, but most of them use smoking as a way to reduce anxiety, despite the obvious health hazards. People with social anxiety are constantly tormented by negative thoughts and intense worrying. A cigarette can reduce the stress and tension associated with anxiety, but it's only a temporary solution. After the effect has worn

off, your anxiety actually increases, because of the withdrawal symptom and the fact that smoking suppresses your innate coping skills.

For people who deal with social anxiety, smoking is also a 'good' way to interact with others. It also helps them remain calm in social situations. Sadly, these small benefits and temporary solutions prevent them from making real changes.

3. Alcohol Consumption

Often used as a way to get rid of inhibitions, drinking can be considered 'a way of escape' for those who are anxious and find it hard to openly express themselves. Since almost 30% of the world's population will experience an anxiety disorder at some point in their lives, the number of people who might resort to alcohol as a 'treatment' is significantly high.

Like smoking, alcohol 'takes the edge off' by masking the negative effects of anxiety. People who struggle with social anxiety are known for having a couple of drinks just before attending a social event. Unlike smoking, alcohol is a bit more 'effective' because it lasts longer and has a stronger impact on anxiety. Unfortunately, the end results are just as bad as it is with smoking.

4. Daydreaming

Daydreaming is a pleasant activity. You just sit on the couch and stare at the ceiling, while your mind wanders to imaginary places. Mind-wondering (or daydreaming) can be extremely useful, especially when we need original solutions to complicated problems. In this case, mind-wondering becomes a guided process.

For people who struggle with anxiety, daydreaming works as a double-edged blade. When your mind is constantly affected by dysfunctional thoughts and negative emotions, daydreaming can do more harm than good. One negative thought leads to another and soon enough, you'll find yourself completely terrified by the uncertainty of the future or any other problems that lie beneath the surface of your consciousness.

When dealing with anxiety, the best thing you can do is to keep your mind focused on daily tasks.

5. Junk Food

Food is essential for both the body and the mind. In order to function properly, our brain needs vitamins and nutrients that can only be obtained through a balanced diet. Junk food is usually rich in sugar, fat and artificial flavors, with literally no nutritional value.

For people who deal with anxiety, food can also be a source of comfort. Many of us tend to eat more when we are stressed out. Dopamine, which is released during a good meal, creates a sense of pleasure in the brain. This is the main reason why people use food to deal with negative emotions.

When it comes to eating healthy, it all boils down to 'what' and 'how much'. From fruits and vegetables, to meat and dairy products, you should always consume a wide variety of foods.

Also, you should have 3 regular meals and 2 snacks every day. By doing this, you avoid eating too much during a single meal.

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