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- » Figuring out how depression and anxiety affect you
- » Finding your personal starting point
- » Knowing when to get more help

Chapter 1

Sorting Out Symptoms of Anxiety and Depression

For people all over the world, these past years of unrest, divisiveness, and fear and uncertainty related to the devastating pandemic have increased stress significantly. Stress often precedes the emergence of emotional disorders, especially anxiety and depression. In the United States, recent surveys suggest that about 40 percent of the adult population suffer from notable symptoms of anxiety or depression. The rates of anxiety and depression among adolescents have also risen dramatically due to disruptions in their lives during these tumultuous times.

Everyone feels sad or worried from time to time. Such emotions are both natural and unavoidable. People worry about their children, bills, aging parents, jobs, health, and powerful social issues. And most people have shed a tear or two watching a sad movie or a news story about a poignant tragedy. It's perfectly natural to experience significant sadness when faced with loss, frustration, or pain. That's normal. Anxiety and depression are part of everyday life.

But when sadness fills most of your days or worries saturate your mind, that's not so normal. You may be experiencing a real problem with depression or anxiety. Anxiety and depression can affect how you think, behave, feel, and relate to others. The discussion and quizzes in this chapter help you figure out how depression and anxiety affect your life. When you understand

what's going on with your emotions, you can start doing something to manage them more effectively.



TIP

This workbook is designed to help with troubling emotions. It isn't meant to be a comprehensive review of emotional disorders. Many people choose to use this book along with professional counseling or therapy. Some use this book on their own. If you want more information and an in-depth discussion about anxiety or depression, take a look at the latest editions of *Anxiety For Dummies* or *Depression For Dummies*.



REMEMBER

Don't freak out if the quizzes in this chapter reveal that you have a few symptoms of anxiety or depression. Almost everyone has struggles; that's human. However, you should be concerned when these symptoms significantly interfere with your life. See the later section in this chapter, "When and Where to Get More Help," for more information.



WARNING

If your symptoms are numerous and severe or your life seems out of control, you should consult your primary care provider or a mental health professional. These quizzes aren't meant to replace trained mental health professionals — they're the only people who can really diagnose your problem.

Dwelling on Negative Thoughts

If you were able to listen in on the thoughts that reverberate through a depressed person's head, you might hear, "I'm a failure," "My future looks bleak," "Things just keep on getting worse," or "I regret so many things in my life."

On the other hand, the thoughts of an anxious person might sound like, "I'm going to make a fool out of myself when I give that speech," "I never know what to say at parties," "The freeway scares me to death," "I know that the odds of a plane crash are small, but flying scares me," or "I'm going to have a nervous breakdown if my editor doesn't like what I write."

Thoughts influence the way you feel. The very darkest thoughts usually lead to depression, whereas anxiety usually stems from thoughts about being judged or hurt. And, of course, people often have both types of thoughts.



PRACTICE

Do your thoughts dwell on the dark, dismal, or the scary aspects of life? Take the quiz in Worksheet 1-1 to determine if your thoughts reflect a problem with anxiety or depression. Put a check mark next to an item if you feel the statement applies to you.

Although these thoughts can occur to someone who's depressed or anxious (or both), the odd-numbered items are most indicative of depression, and the even-numbered items reflect anxious thinking. There's no pass or fail mark on this quiz. However, the more items you endorse, the more you have cause for concern; specifically, if you check more than eight or ten items, you should think seriously about addressing your condition. At the same time, if you very strongly believe in or you frequently have any of these thoughts, you may have too much anxiety or depression. For example, if you worry all the time (item number 2) with no relief, you could benefit from working on that issue.

Worksheet 1-1 The Negative Thinking Quiz

- 1. Things are getting worse and worse for me.
 - 2. I worry all the time.
 - 3. I think I'm worthless.
 - 4. I never know what to say.
 - 5. No one would miss me if I were dead.
 - 6. I'm afraid that I'll get sick.
 - 7. I think I'm a failure.
 - 8. My thoughts race, and I obsess about things.
 - 9. I don't look forward to much of anything.
 - 10. I get really nervous around people I don't know.
 - 11. The world would be better off without me.
 - 12. Thoughts about past traumas keep rolling through my mind.
 - 13. I find it impossible to make decisions.
 - 14. I can't stand it when I'm the center of attention.
 - 15. My life is full of regrets.
 - 16. I can't stand making mistakes.
 - 17. I don't see things getting any better in the future.
 - 18. I worry about my health all the time.
 - 19. I'm deeply ashamed of myself.
 - 20. I over-prepare for everything.
-



PRACTICE

Take a moment to write down your results on Worksheet 1-2, and then reflect on whether or not you believe you have difficulties with anxiety, depression, or both.

Worksheet 1-2 My Reflections



WARNING

If you have any thoughts of suicide or utter hopelessness, consult your primary care provider or a mental health professional immediately.



TIP

If you have symptoms of both anxiety and depression, don't be surprised. Anxiety and depression often occur together.

Blue and Anxious Behavior

If you were to follow a depressed or anxious person around, you might see some behavioral signs of their emotional turmoil. That's because depression and anxiety on the inside affect what people do on the outside. For example, a depressed person may look tired, move slowly, or withdraw from friends and family; an anxious person may avoid socializing or have a trembling voice.



Take the quiz in Worksheet 1-3 to see if your behavior indicates a problem with anxiety or depression. Check off each statement that applies to you.

PRACTICE

Worksheet 1-3 The Distraught Behavior Quiz

- 1. I've been crying for no clear reason.
 - 2. I pace around when I'm worried.
 - 3. Sometimes I can't make myself get out of bed.
 - 4. I avoid going into crowded areas.
 - 5. I can't seem to make myself exercise.
 - 6. I avoid risks because I'm afraid of failure.
 - 7. I don't do things for fun lately.
 - 8. I always stay away from activities that could be dangerous.
 - 9. I've been missing work lately because I just don't have the motivation.
 - 10. I'm really fidgety.
 - 11. I feel like I am walking in quicksand; I can't get moving.
 - 12. I avoid people or places because I feel anxious.
 - 13. I don't care what I look like anymore.
 - 14. I spend too much time making sure I look okay.
 - 15. I don't laugh anymore.
 - 16. My hands shake when I'm nervous.
 - 17. I've been letting things go that I need to attend to.
 - 18. I feel compelled to repeat actions to keep myself safe.
-

Again, there's no pass or fail on this quiz. The more items you check, the greater the problem. Once again, even-numbered items are most consistent with anxiety, and odd-numbered items largely indicate depression. And, of course, like many people, you may have symptoms of both types of problems.



Again, add up your answers and reflect on your results in Worksheet 1-4.

PRACTICE

Physical Funkiness

Depression and anxiety inevitably produce physical symptoms. In fact, some people primarily suffer from changes in appetite, sleep, energy, or pain while reporting few problematic thoughts or behaviors. These symptoms directly affect your body, but they're not as easily observed by other people as the behavioral signs covered in the preceding section.



Take The Sad, Stressed Sensations Quiz in Worksheet 1-5 to see if your body is trying to tell you something about your emotional state.

PRACTICE

Worksheet 1-5 The Sad, Stressed Sensations Quiz

- 1. I have no appetite.
 - 2. My palms sweat all the time.
 - 3. I wake up too early each morning and can't go back to sleep.
 - 4. I've been experiencing a lot of nausea and diarrhea.
 - 5. I've been sleeping a lot more than usual.
 - 6. I feel shaky all over.
 - 7. I've been having lots of aches and pains for no good reason.
 - 8. When I'm nervous, my chest feels tight.
 - 9. I have no energy lately.
 - 10. My heart races when I'm tense.
 - 11. I've been constipated a lot more often than usual.
 - 12. I feel like I can't catch my breath.
 - 13. I'm eating all the time lately.
 - 14. My hands are often cold and clammy.
 - 15. I've lost my sex drive.
 - 16. Sometimes I hyperventilate.
 - 17. Every move I make takes more effort lately.
 - 18. I get dizzy easily.
-



WARNING

The symptoms in this quiz can also result from various physical illnesses, drugs in your medicine cabinet, or even your three-cup coffee fix in the morning. Be sure to consult your primary care provider if you're experiencing any of the symptoms in The Sad, Stressed Sensations Quiz. It's always a good idea to have a checkup once a year, or more frequently if you experience noticeable changes in your body.

Although physical sensations overlap in anxiety and depression, even-numbered items in the quiz above are most consistent with anxiety, and the odd-numbered items usually plague those with depression. There's no cutoff point for indicating a problem. The more statements you check off, though, the worse your issue.



PRACTICE

Add up your answers and reflect on your results in Worksheet 1-6. Think about other physical problems you may have that don't appear on the list that may be related to your emotions and jot those down as well.

Worksheet 1-6

My Reflections

Emotions of Anxiety and Depression

Emotions erupt in response to what happens in the present, what happened in the past, and what might happen in the future. Emotional reactions involve physiological, cognitive, and behavioral responses. People across the world express six primary emotions:

- » Happiness
- » Sadness
- » Anger
- » Fear
- » Disgust
- » Surprise

From those basic emotions, more subtle expressions emerge. For example, from happiness springs joy, contentment, cheerfulness, or pleasure. From sadness, depression, gloom, despair, despondency, low self-esteem, or shame occur. Fear may bring anxiety, terror, worry, embarrassment, or panic. Disgust usually leads to distaste or feelings of grossness. Surprise is a brief emotion. What follows surprise varies depending on what brought forth the initial response. Surprise may turn into curiosity, amusement, disgust, relief, or fear.

Emotions guide behavior. Fear increases alertness and avoidance, anger produces aggression, and sadness involves withdrawal. Although most people have a variety of emotional experiences, those with anxiety or depression are likely to experience more sadness and fear, or possibly anger and disgust.

Which primary emotions do you experience the most frequently? Think about a typical day and reflect on what you're feeling. Think about what happened just before your feeling. Were you thinking about the past or the future? Record your experience in Worksheet 1-7.

Worksheet 1-7 My Reflections

Reflecting upon Relationships

When you're feeling down or distressed for any length of time, odds are that your relationships with those around you will take a hit. Although you may think that your depression or anxiety affects only you, it affects your friends, family, lovers, coworkers, and acquaintances. Even the strangers you interact with, such as waiters, flight attendants, clerks, and bank tellers, can suffer from your emotional state.



PRACTICE

Take the quiz in Worksheet 1-8 to see if your emotions are causing trouble with your relationships. Check off any statements that apply to you.

Worksheet 1-8 The Conflicted Connections Quiz

- 1. I don't feel like being with anybody.
 - 2. I get very nervous when I meet new people.
 - 3. I don't feel like talking to anyone.
 - 4. I'm overly sensitive when anyone criticizes me in the slightest way.
 - 5. I'm more irritable with others than usual.
 - 6. I worry about saying the wrong thing.
 - 7. I don't feel connected to anyone.
 - 8. I worry about people leaving me.
 - 9. I don't feel like going out with anyone anymore.
 - 10. I'm plagued by visions of people I care about getting hurt.
 - 11. I've withdrawn from everyone.
 - 12. I feel uptight in crowds, so I stay at home.
 - 13. I feel numb around people.
 - 14. I always feel uncomfortable in the spotlight.
 - 15. I feel unworthy of friendship and love.
 - 16. Compliments make me feel uneasy.
-

You guessed it; there's no cutoff score here to tell you definitively whether or not you're anxious or depressed. But the more items you check off, the more your relationships likely suffer from your anxiety, depression, or both. Odd-numbered items usually indicate problems with depression, and even-numbered items particularly accompany anxious feelings.



REMEMBER

Many people are a little shy or introverted. You may feel anxious meeting new people and may be uncomfortable in the spotlight — these feelings aren't necessarily anything to be concerned about. However, such issues become problematic when you find yourself avoiding social activities or meeting new people because of your shyness.



PRACTICE

Reflect on your results and write about which relationships are most affected by your emotions in Worksheet 1-9.

Worksheet 1-9

My Reflections

Plotting Your Personal Problems Profile

The Personal Problems Profile provides you with an overview of your problematic symptoms. (If you skipped the quizzes in the previous sections of this chapter, go back and take the time to complete them; your answers to those quizzes come into play in this exercise.) The profile exercise in this section helps you identify the ways in which anxiety and depression affect you. One good thing about this profile is that you can track how these symptoms change as you progress through the rest of this book.



EXAMPLE

Tyler, a middle-aged chemical engineer, doesn't consider himself depressed or plagued with any emotional problems. But when he sees his primary care doctor, Tyler complains of fatigue, recent weight gain, and a noticeable loss in his sex drive. These feelings predated the pandemic but became more noticeable while he was quarantined. After ruling out physical causes, the doctor suggests that he may be depressed. He reluctantly agrees to meet with a social worker.

When Tyler fills out his Personal Problems Profile (see Worksheet 1-10), he lists the following top ten symptoms and notes whether they indicate anxiety or depression (A or D).

As you can see, Tyler suffers primarily from symptoms of depression. And most of these symptoms are physical in nature. Filling out his Personal Problems Profile helps Tyler see that he has a depression he wasn't even consciously aware of. He reflects on his discovery (see Worksheet 1-11).



REMEMBER

This is the *Anxiety & Depression Workbook For Dummies*. You can't feel better without doing a little work. Don't worry; the work isn't that difficult. Of course, you can skip a few exercises, but the more of them you complete, the sooner you'll start feeling better. Odd as it may seem, writing things down does a world of good. Writing helps you remember, clarifies your thinking, and increases focus and reflection.

Worksheet 1-10 Tyler's Personal Problems Profile

1. I have no energy lately. (D)
 2. Every move I make takes more effort lately. (D)
 3. I've lost my sex drive. (D)
 4. I've been eating all the time lately. (D)
 5. I don't feel like being with anyone. (D)
 6. I don't look forward to much of anything. (D)
 7. I find it impossible to make decisions. (D)
 8. I worry about my health all the time. (A)
 9. I feel shaky all over. (A)
 10. Sometimes I can't make myself get out of bed. (D)
-

Worksheet 1-11 Tyler's Reflections

I can see that I do have signs of depression. I didn't realize that before. And I see that depression particularly shows up in my body. It's affecting my energy, sex drive, and appetite. It's also making me withdraw from my girlfriend, which I can see from my loss of sex drive and lack of desire to be with her. Apparently, I also have a few symptoms of anxiety, and I think I always have. It's time to do something about this.



PRACTICE

Complete your own Personal Problems Profile in Worksheet 1-12. Look back at the quizzes earlier in this chapter and underline the most problematic thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and relationship issues you have. Then choose up to ten of the most significant items you've underlined and write them in the My Personal Problems Profile space that's provided.

In addition, put an *A* by the symptoms that are most indicative of anxiety (even-numbered items in the preceding quizzes) and a *D* by symptoms that are most consistent with depression (odd-numbered items).

Do your symptoms mostly involve anxiety, depression, or a mix of the two? And do they seem to mostly affect your thoughts, feelings, behaviors, or relationships? Take some time to reflect on your profile. What conclusions can you draw? Record them in Worksheet 1-13.

Worksheet 1-12 My Personal Problems Profile

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Worksheet 1-13 My Reflections

Choosing Your Challenge

The next four parts of this workbook cover the areas of thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and relationships. One obvious way of deciding which area to begin with is to choose the one that causes you the most problems. Or you can work through them in order. Sometimes it makes sense to start with a relatively minor problem and achieve quick success. Wherever you choose to start, you should know that all these areas interact with each other. For example, if you have anxious *thoughts* about being judged, you're likely to avoid (*behavior*) the spotlight. And you could very well experience butterflies (*feelings*). Furthermore, you may be overly sensitive to criticism from others (*relationships*).



PRACTICE

Nevertheless, we find that many people like to start out by tackling the problem area that best fits their personal styles. In other words, some folks are doers and others are thinkers; still others are feelers, and some are relaters. Use the Personal Style Questionnaire in Worksheet 1-14 to pinpoint and understand your preferred style.

Are you predominately a thinker, doer, feeler, or relater? If you checked considerably more items in one area than the others, you may want to start your work in the part of this workbook that corresponds to that style:

»» **Thinker:** Part II, "Thinking About Thinking: Thought Therapy"

»» **Doer:** Part III, "Actions Against Angst: Behavior Therapy"

»» **Feeler:** Part IV, "Focus on Physical Feelings"

»» **Relater:** Part V, "Relationship Therapy"

Worksheet 1-14 Personal Style Questionnaire

Thinkers

- I like facts and numbers.
 - I tend to be a very logical person.
 - I'm a planner.
 - I like to think through problems.
 - I carefully weigh costs and benefits before I act.
-

Doers

- I can't stand sitting around and thinking.
 - I like to act on problems.
 - I like accomplishing things each day.
 - I like plowing through obstacles.
 - I act first and think later.
-

Feelers

- I'm a very sensuous person.
 - I pay a lot of attention to how I feel.
 - I love massages and hot baths.
 - Music and art are very important to me.
 - I'm very in touch with my feelings.
-

Relaters

- I'm a people person.
 - I'd rather be with people than anything else.
 - I care deeply about other people's feelings.
 - I'm very empathetic.
 - Relationships are more important to me than accomplishments.
-

When and Where to Get More Help

Self-help tools benefit almost everyone who puts in the effort. Many people find they can overcome minor to moderate emotional problems by working with books like this one. Nevertheless, some difficulties require professional help, perhaps because your anxiety or depression is especially serious or because your problems are simply too complex to be addressed by self-help methods.



PRACTICE

Work through The Serious Symptom Checklist in Worksheet 1-15 to find out if you should seriously consider seeking treatment from a mental health professional.

Worksheet 1-15 The Serious Symptom Checklist

- I have thoughts about killing myself.
 - I feel hopeless.
 - My sleep has been seriously disturbed for more than two weeks (including sleeping too little or too much).
 - I have unbearable pain.
 - I'm a horrible burden to my family.
 - My partner left me for another, and I can't take the humiliation anymore.
 - I feel out-of-control anger toward someone and want to seek violent revenge.
 - My life is worthless, and I have no reason to live.
 - I've gained or lost more than a few pounds without trying to do so.
 - I'm ignoring major responsibilities in my life, such as going to work or paying bills.
 - I'm hearing voices.
 - I'm seeing things that aren't there.
 - My drug use or drinking are interfering with my life.
 - My thoughts race, and I can't slow them down.
 - Someone I trust and care about has said I need help.
 - I've been getting into numerous fights or arguments.
 - I've been making really poor decisions lately (such as making outlandish purchases or getting involved in questionable business schemes).
 - Lately I've felt that people are out to get me.
 - I haven't been able to get myself to leave the house except for absolute essentials.
 - I'm taking risks that I never did before.
 - Suddenly I feel like I'm a special person who's capable of extraordinary things.
 - I'm spending considerably more time every day than I should repeating actions such as hand washing, arranging things, and checking and rechecking things (appliances, locks, and so on).
 - I have highly disturbing flashbacks or nightmares about past trauma that I can't seem to forget about.
-



WARNING

Checking off any one item from the list means that you should strongly consider a professional consultation. Furthermore, please realize that no such list can be all-inclusive. If you're really not sure if you need help, see a mental health professional for an assessment.



WARNING

If you feel like ending your life, the suicide hotline is a quick and anonymous way to get immediate help. In the United States, the number is 800-273-8255 or 800-273-TALK. Trained counselors will talk to you 24/7. You can call the number even if you feel helpless or hopeless or not suicidal. Staff will offer support and local information. If you prefer, text 741741 and text **hello**

or **help**. You will get an immediate response. Launching in July 2022, the suicide hotline can be reached by dialing 988.

If you checked one or more of the statements above and you're not suicidal but are beginning to think that perhaps you need help, where should you go? Many people start with their primary care provider, which is a pretty good idea because your provider can also determine if your problems have a physical cause. If physical problems have been ruled out or treated and you still need help, you can:

- » Ask your primary care provider for a recommendation.
- » Check with your state's psychology, counseling, social work, or psychiatric association.
- » Call your insurance company for recommendations.
- » Ask trusted friends or family for recommendations.
- » Contact your local university department of psychology, social work, counseling, or psychiatry for a referral.



WARNING

Either before or during your first session, talk to the mental health professional and ask if you'll receive a scientifically validated treatment for anxiety or depression, such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), Emotion Focused Therapy, or Interpersonal Therapy. Unfortunately, some practitioners lack necessary training in therapies that have shown effectiveness in scientific studies. Also, make sure whoever you see is a licensed mental health practitioner.



REMEMBER

Understanding and accepting that you need more help is a sign of strength, not weakness. It takes bravery to admit that you might have a problem with your emotions, and it takes courage to seek a resolution.

At this point, you should pat yourself on the back. Whether this is the first chapter you've read or not, you've made a good start. Every minute you spend with this workbook is likely to improve your mood. Just give it a little time.

