

On a personal note, I take a considerable amount of an anti-depressant/anti-anxiety medication everyday and am slowly returning into society.



Communication

Very important - from us to you and vice versa; I can't possibly describe to you *how* we are feeling unless we explain it in detail or you too have suffered from the illness. So, talk about it often, whenever a question or thought arises.

I got through the worst of my time because my Mum was compassionate, inquisitive, helpful and understanding as much as possible. She familiarised herself with the illness, discussed things with my doctor and acted positively on the information available (which at that time was next to nothing). This also applies to my long-standing relationship with the "Black Dog", depression. Luckily, my relationship with my Mum is a most precious one, then and now. Therefore,

- ~ be loving
- ~ ask questions but don't question us
- ~ accept our need for being quiet, to sleep, to cry...

I would, and still do, tell people that I am, or about to, have a panic attack. That way I don't have to lie or offer excuses.

In closing, thank you for trying to understand and help us.

Beck

Beck can be contacted by submitting an enquiry on the FOCUS website :
www.focushealth.com.au

Do you know someone whose behaviour has changed?

For example:

- ~ Fear of doing everyday tasks
- ~ Avoiding people & places
- ~ Taking days off work

My story might help you.



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Anxiety



My Story

To Help Your Family & Friends

How You Can Help

This leaflet is specifically designed for *family and friends* of those who suffer from any form of Anxiety with simple points on how to be compassionate, understanding and helpful.

I have lived with Anxiety for many years now and have become aware of the symptoms to look out for in another person. Some of these are:

- ~ fear doing some things we may have done all our lives; simple, everyday things
- ~ not as socially outgoing as before
- ~ avoidance of people and/or places
- ~ staying home more often
- ~ not attending class, sporting functions, absent from work

If you know someone who has changed in personality or social behaviour, here are a few thoughts and ideas to help you help us.



What Doesn't Help

During the past years of therapy and CBT, I have become aware of certain things that would trigger Anxiety brought on by statements and comments made by friends and family who did not understand how I was feeling nor what to do to help me or to calm me down. Some of the things said which did NOT help were:

- ~ pull up your socks
- ~ you'll be right/it'll be ok
- ~ stop crying/shaking
- ~ do this, do that! Push, push, push
- ~ asking why?



Instead Try

- ~ letting us know it's ok to cry as it is cleansing of the soul
- ~ put your arm around us - however, please ask first as you don't want to crowd us or cause feelings of claustrophobia
- ~ ask what it is you can do to make us feel better eg. water, blanket, sit, lay down, go for a walk
- ~ be patient and unhurried
- ~ be sincerely comforting

Please remember that panic attacks happen suddenly and totally out of the blue.

When I have had a panic attack and have calmed down, I sometimes try to slowly resume daily activities as much as possible, depending on the severity. Do try to engage us in gentle conversation; nothing too difficult.

Mostly it is unlikely for us to make any decisions - from eating to drinking, so you will need to make the decisions for us at that time.

I get very exhausted after a severe panic attack, so all I wish to do is rest my body and mind.

It is important to **be kind, calm and positive** around us as sensitivity is at its highest level and any disputes, confrontations or negative energy will be difficult for us to cope with.



Some More Suggestions

- ~ **DO NOT JUDGE! DO NOT JUDGE!** We feel bad enough as it is.
- ~ **TIMING:** be prepared to drop everything and attend to us when we are in panic mode and in a public place as we need to run and go to a 'safe' place really fast.
- ~ If confused by our actions or "just not getting it", ask us how we feel, do we know what triggered the attack (but don't ask "why"?), or ask us what is happening on the inside
- ~ make us feel special in small ways - anything large is overwhelming
- ~ give encouragement and praise often
- ~ remember the *Inner Child* and be playful, light-hearted
- ~ limit responsibilities as they are too much for us to handle at that time and the likelihood of a positive outcome is very slim
- ~ be prepared for hearing "no thank you" much of the time to simple things like food, baths, nice clothing, jewellery or make-up as we feel not worthy of such "luxuries".



Medication

Make sure the Doctor is made aware of the situation and accept that medication is necessary. Some of us will need to take medication for the rest of our lives. Even though we may seem better after a while, it is necessary for us to continually take medication. I found it difficult to accept this in the past as I would have liked to feel good without having to rely on my little pills each day! However, encourage us to take our medication at the same time every day. We must not break the cycle. Our bodies take time to adjust to the effects and properties of the meds. If we stop, it's like having to start all over again.