



Weekly Tips + Links for Your Health

bcp vpa

THE LEARNING BRAIN

Each week in BCPVPA eNews, we share tips, links and self-assessment tools that will help our members to better understand the mental health continuum, and to use the resources that are available.

bcpvpa.bc.ca/thelearningbrain

Friday April 10th, 2020

COPING WITH ANXIETY

We are in an interesting time, full of unknowns and bombarded with anxious messages from media about the global pandemic. There is no doubt that some of this information is important for us to know so that we can protect our health during this turbulent time. However, this continuous and often exaggerated information can take a toll on our mental health.

*You may not be able to control what is happening around you,
but you can control your thoughts and response.*

What does anxiety look like?

Anxiety is different for everyone – from symptoms to severity, there is no one-size-fits-all definition. For some people, who have lived with anxiety for most of their lives, they may have forgotten what it means to not be anxious. I was one of those people, but learned that I can ease what I believed was ‘normal’ with regards to my suffering from anxiety.

Symptoms of anxiety can include:

- Being tense and shaky
- Having ruminating and/or racing thoughts
- Experiencing chest pain or pressure
- Being easily irritated
- Excessive need to be in control
- Dreading upcoming events
- Feelings of panic
- Overreacting to insignificant challenges
- Avoiding objects, people or situations

A great resource where you can learn more about anxiety is [Anxiety Canada](https://www.anxietycanada.com/).



Are you suffering from anxiety?

If you think you may be suffering from anxiety, [take this quiz](#). A well-known and validated tool for assessing anxiety is the **Beck Index**. [Here is an example](#) I found online that you could use and bring to your physician. Your physician may have their own tools as well.

Chronic anxiety can lead to serious mental and physical health complications. The best way to cope with anxiety is to address it early before it becomes something so large that it seems impossible to manage, such as **Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) or Panic Attacks**. You or someone you know may have Panic Attacks – an over reaction to an assumed threat. It can often become a never-ending cycle of being worried about being worried!

Watch this excellent [5 min video](#) on Generalized Anxiety Disorders and Panic Attacks.

*If you feel you are suffering,
take action right away!*

When to see your physician?

There are no hard and fast rules as to when you should see your physician about your anxiety. Next week, we will review early warning signs for when to seek help. Meanwhile, when it comes to anxiety, if you feel you need to see someone, it is probably time.

If you complete the Beck quiz noted above, and it looks like you have medium to high levels of anxiety based on your score, you should consider seeing your physician.

Healthlinkbc also has some [information on anxiety and a quick quiz](#) that may guide you to whether you should see a physician.



In BC, we are also very fortunate to have access to **Babylon** – an app you can download on your phone or tablet. **Babylon provides virtual health (powered by TELUS)** where you can access a physician quickly from your own home and it is covered by our medical services plan (MSP in BC).

Babylon is very handy right now as people are staying home and not venturing out – and may be feeling very anxious! [Check it out!](#)

What can I do when I am feeling anxious?

[Here is a 12 minute video](#) on how to use Cognitive Behaviour Therapy to ease anxiety. Yes, it is a little dry, I will admit, but after reviewing many videos online, I really like the learning in this one.

Other ways to ease anxiety...

1 Try a Visualization Exercise

Close your eyes and imagine yourself in a safe, peaceful and stress-free environment. Concentrate on the details of this place – the sights, sounds and smells! Stay focused on your breathing while concentrating on your safe place for 5 minutes.

Try one of the guided visualization exercises [listed here](#) from the Anxiety Canada website.

2 Talk to Someone

Talking to a trusted friend or family member may be the last thing you feel like doing, but it can make a big difference. Start the conversation with, “I’ve been feeling very anxious lately. This is really challenging for me to talk about, but I trust that you will listen without judgement.”

You can always speak to a professional through your District’s EFAP or the EIP.

3 Exercise

Exercise is proven to release endorphins that improve your mood. Whatever form of exercise you choose – walk, run, lift weights, swim, dance, bike etc. – focus on it wholeheartedly while you are doing it. The more you focus on what you’re doing, the more beneficial it will be. Not sure where to start?

There are many great yoga for anxiety videos online depending on your level of fitness you can do in your living room



BCPVPA's Early Intervention Program (EIP) offers an excellent opportunity to be proactive in managing your health and well-being.

If you are feeling anxious, you can always reach out to the Early Intervention Program provided by humanworks. This is free to members. The goal of the **humanworks Early Intervention Program (EIP)** is to help members to remain healthy and well at work. The objective of the EIP is to support BCPVPA LTD Benefits Plan members experiencing personal and/or professional disruption as a result of illness, injury, or disability.

By participating in this program, the Plan members will be connected with an EIP Consultant who will equip them with the tools and resources they need to address their health-related challenges so that they can stay at work or resume their work roles in a safe and durable manner.

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WHAT METHODS DO YOU USE TO COPE WITH ANXIETY?



We'll be posting this question on Twitter and Instagram this week! Follow **@bcpvpa** to read, engage, share and comment!

Next week:

**Early Warning Signs
of an Injured Brain**

Get in touch! If you have any questions about The Learning Brain series, contact

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