



Mental Health America of Franklin County

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DON'T LET WORRY GET YOU DOWN

As a community college student, you have a lot on your mind. Sometimes life can feel overwhelming. Worries can take over and wear you down. If that's happening to you, there are things you can do to get relief. And there's help out there for you. It's no wonder if you are worried. If you are just starting college, you have a lot to adjust to. Even when you get used to being a student, the pace can be intense. You have classes to prepare for, papers to write and exams to take. There are bills to pay, and perhaps a part-time job to juggle with your schoolwork. Commuting can be a hassle. Will you be able to find work when your education is done? How are you getting along with friends and family?

Worry, in itself, is not a bad thing. Life is full of uncertainty and change, and we all have our worries. Anxiety pushes us to work harder when we need to. But too much worry can be unhealthy and affect us in serious ways. Here are some signs that worry is excessive:

- You can't stop worrying
- You feel very fearful in certain situations
- You feel constantly tense and irritable
- It is hard to concentrate, or make decisions
- You aren't sleeping well
- Your body is reacting with headaches, digestive problems or muscle tension
- You are seeking escapes like eating or smoking more, drinking or drug use
- You are pulling away from other people
- You feel despair or hopelessness

If you are having any of these symptoms, it's time to take action. Chances are, you can take some practical steps to help your worries recede. However, if your symptoms are very intense or have lasted for a long time, it's best to seek the help of the campus counseling service or your doctor. First, let's look at how you can help yourself.

Take time out for yourself. Going around the clock, getting over-tired or getting run down can make you more vulnerable to worry. You may lose perspective, think less clearly, and react more intensely than you do when you are well rested. And your concentration and accuracy can suffer. Schedule time out for study breaks, exercise regularly and connect with friends. Get enough sleep, especially before tests. For more tips on caring for yourself, check out www.liveyourlifewell.org.

Talk to people who understand. The more you keep your worries to yourself, the bigger they seem. As you talk things out with other people, you get relief and gain perspective. You'll quickly discover that other people face the same challenges you do, and may have ideas on how to handle them.

You may not realize it, but you are surrounded by people who are willing to help. You can connect with classmates and dorm mates, talk with a professor, make an appointment with your academic advisor, visit the school chaplain, and check out the campus counseling service. They are all there to help you.

Shift your thinking. Ask yourself how realistic your worry is. Our imaginations can take us into situations that may never develop. Are you worrying about things that you can't change? Some things like the state of the economy are out of your control. Others are far in the future. Try to set such worries aside for now and concentrate on problems you can do something about.

Look for solutions. Follow these steps to get a handle on your worries. You'll discover what is causing them, and find possible solutions.

- First, get your worries down on paper. Make a list of all the things that worry you, large and small. You may find that there are things on your list you can't do anything about right now. For the moment, cross them off your list.
- Now look at what's left. Look at each worry as a problem that might have a solution. Do some brainstorming, and write down as many solutions as you can think of. For now, silence your internal judge. Don't reject solutions that seem silly.
- If you are stumped for solutions, seek out a person you trust and ask for ideas.
- Next assess your list. Try asking yourself how you'd like this situation to end. Which options likely will get you there? You also can weigh pros and cons.
- Pick a few solutions that sound doable. Don't try to tackle all your problems at once. Break each solution into reasonable chunks and make a concrete plan for getting them done. Ask people you trust for feedback on your plans.
- Get started. Taking action and making even small changes puts you more in control.
- Don't get discouraged if the first solution you try doesn't pan out. Try another one on your list.

Seeing each worry as a solvable problem can reduce the fear you feel. Once you begin trying out solutions, you should start feeling better. If, however, you are still gripped by fear and anxiety you can't shake, you may have a mental health condition known as an anxiety disorder. Take a 3-minute screening at www.mhafc.org. Print out the results and show them to a counselor.

Get help for anxiety. If left untreated, an anxiety disorder can interfere with schoolwork, social life and everyday activities. It can also lead to depression. You should know that anxiety disorders are the most common mental health conditions. They are highly treatable and with the right help, you can get better.

To get help, start with your student health center or counseling service on campus. Most colleges provide limited free mental health services and can refer you to local providers for longer-term treatment. You can also contact Mental Health America of Franklin County. Call 614-221-1441 or visit www.mhafc.org for help.

In crisis? If you ever feel so overwhelmed with anxiety that you think about hurting yourself, call 1-800-273-TALK to speak with someone who can help you. In an emergency, call 911.

Learn More

Anxiety Disorders Association of America

Phone: (240) 485-1001

www.adaa.org

Freedom From Fear

Phone: (718) 351-1717

www.freedomfromfear.org

Obsessive-Compulsive Foundation

Phone: (203) 401-2070

www.ocfoundation.org

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)

Phone: (866) 615-6464

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/anxiety-disorders/index.shtml>

Mental Health America of Franklin County is a private, not-for-profit organization, established in 1956. We help people navigate the mental health system. We are dedicated to promoting mental health in Franklin County through advocacy, education, and support services. Our programs include: information and referral to community mental health and alcohol/drug services; free support groups for people with mental illness and their families; an Ombudsman program that assists clients in navigating the mental health and alcohol/drug system; mental health screenings in English and Spanish; Pro Bono Counseling Program where underinsured and uninsured individuals can receive free counseling; community and professional mental health education including Get Connected; and a quarterly newsletter featuring legislative updates and new happenings at MHAFC. We receive funding from the Franklin County ADAMH Board and United Way of Central Ohio. To become a member or find out more information, please visit us online at www.mhafc.org.