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# Life Lines

Improving your quality of life, one step at a time

Issue #7:

**UNCOVERING THE FACES OF ANXIETY**

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2. **Genetics.** While science has yet to identify an exact gene, it's believed that genetics play a role in or at least increases the risk of developing an anxiety disorder. Chromosomal irregularities (missing, extra, or irregular portions of the chromosomal DNA), have been hypothesized to be the connection between genetics and anxiety disorders. Dr. Amy Przeworski of Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland has said "Individuals inherit a predisposition to being an anxious person, [and] about 30 to 40 percent of the variability is related to genetic factors."<sup>2</sup>
  3. **Psychological.** There are several psychological theories on the causes of anxiety disorders, however each theory tends to

If you struggle with anxiety, you may want to consider reducing your caffeine intake, or cutting it out completely. Caffeine has been shown to increase cortisol levels, which can lead to anxiousness.<sup>10</sup> Nicotine, often thought to be a relaxant is actually a powerful stimulant that produces epinephrine (adrenaline) when inhaled. The production of adrenaline causes a spike in glucose levels which increase blood pressure, heart rate, and respiration, increasing the likelihood of anxiety manifesting.<sup>11</sup> Alcohol serves as both a stimulant and a depressant, making alcohol a key factor if you struggle with anxiety. When alcohol is consumed, your blood alcohol content (BAC) rises, causing mood and emotions to change; however as your BAC decreases, alcohol induced anxiety can manifest along with depression and fatigue.<sup>12</sup> When consuming caffeine, nicotine, or alcohol, realize these are key factors that directly affect your anxiety levels.

Worrying is a mental habit you can learn how to manage. Set aside dedicated time in your day to focus on difficult events or tasks. Write them down, assess the scenario and reflect upon how to approach or manage the situation. By challenging anxious thoughts and learning to accept uncertainty, you build resiliency which can reduce anxiety and fear.

Understanding what anxiety disorders are, how they manifest, and techniques that can be used to manage anxiety, can help us support ourselves and others in minimizing anxiety symptoms. Regardless of diagnosis, we can all benefit from a better understanding of anxiety and anxiety reduction techniques. If you feel you or a loved one may have symptoms of an anxiety disorder or require support for anxiety, speak to a healthcare professional for proper diagnosis and treatment.

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