



Helping Hands



If You Love A Person With Anxiety

(excerpts from Orchid Mental Health Legal Advocacy of Colorado, November, 2015)

Anxiety is tough, isn't it? Not just for the people that have it, but for you – the people that stick with them – while they're going through it. It's emotionally taxing on both ends, it's physically demanding at times, and of course mentally demanding most of the time. Often, plans have to be changed to accommodate the anxiety. Situations have to be avoided at times. Planning has to be just that bit more thorough. Emotional needs can change daily. It's a lot to work through, and it can be hard to get in their head to understand on top of that.

It's understandably confusing at times, so consider this your cheat sheet. Here are some things for you to consider when dealing with someone with anxiety.

1. They are more than just their anxiety

If you want to be supportive of someone with anxiety, remind them that you appreciate the individual behind the anxiety. Recognise that they are more than just their anxiety. They are human with all the complexities that everyone else has.

2. They can get tired easily

Anxiety is exhausting. Anxiety causes people to live in hyper-tense states. They are always on alert, their mind is very rarely settled, and their body is always ready to fight or flight. Situations that people without anxiety can just breeze through are more tiring for those with anxiety.

3. They can get overwhelmed easily. They're aware of everything going on around them. Every noise, every action, every smell, every light, every person, every object. For someone existing in such a hyper-alert state a situation that doesn't seem that overwhelming (e.g. the thought of more than a handful of people talking in a room) can cause their head to spin.

4. They are well aware their anxiety is often irrational

Being aware of the irrationality does not stop the thoughts. It does not stop the thinking of hundreds of different worst-case scenarios. Pointing out that it's irrational doesn't help – what they need is compassion, understanding, and support.

5. They can communicate how they feel (you just have to actually listen)

Having anxiety does not mean that they are incapable of expressing or communicating. (Unless they're panicking, in which case they likely can't). They still like to talk and they still like to speak for themselves. They will tell you how they feel. Take the time to listen.

6. They don't need someone constantly asking "are you okay?" while they're panicking. Their heart is pounding, their hands are clammy, their chest is tightening, their limbs are vibrating from all the adrenalin and their mind has just sunken into the limbic system's 'fight or flight' response. Part of them thinks they're dying. Instead of asking "are you okay?" try something more helpful and constructive. Good examples would be:

- "Remember your breathing"
 - "Let's go somewhere quieter or where you will feel safe"
 - "I'm here if you need me." (consider leaving them alone unless they ask you to stay with them)
 - "The panicky feeling won't last. You've got past this before, you'll get past it again"
- They are usually experienced in handling their anxiety; let them get through it however they see fit.

7. They appreciate you sticking with them

Anxiety is rough on everyone involved, which means you too. They understand that, they understand their irrationality; they understand you've not done some things you would've liked to because they couldn't. They're not oblivious to what it takes to support them. There's one thing in common across the board for everyone with anxiety, they over think. They over think a lot. Part of this over thinking always comes back to the people that have supported them. Your support doesn't go unmissed – no matter how subtle you may think it's been.



Signs of Significant Personality Change

Occasionally, family and friends go through changes. You may notice sudden changes in the way that someone typically behaves, or the changes may be more gradual. You will notice they behave in ways that don't seem to fit their values, or they will seem profoundly different. Here are some signs that the change is of concern:

Agitation

They are uncharacteristically angry, anxious, agitated, or moody. They experience frequent problems controlling their temper and seem irritable and unable to calm down. They may be unable to sleep normally and have times when they inappropriately explode in anger at a minor problem.

Withdrawal

They withdraw or isolate themselves from other people. Someone who is usually socially engaged may pull away from family and friends and stop taking part in activities they used to enjoy. You will notice a change in someone's typical sociability. They may also pull away from their normal social support systems.

Hopelessness

They seem overcome with hopelessness and overwhelmed by their circumstances. They may experience extreme or prolonged grief, or feelings of worthlessness or guilt. People in this situation may say that the world would be better off without them, suggesting suicidal thinking.

If someone you know is experiencing any of the above symptoms, your IAM EAP representation is available to speak with you about your concerns. It is free and confidential.

IAM Peer Employee Assistance



The heart and soul of the District 141 Employee Assistance Program are your local lodge EAP peer coordinators. These dedicated men and women volunteer their personal time to assist other union members and their families who are experiencing personal difficulties. EAP coordinators do not make clinical diagnoses or clinical evaluations. They are trained to make a basic assessment of your situation and refer you to an appropriate resource for a more detailed evaluation. EAP coordinators will follow up to ensure you have been able to access services that address the difficulty you are experiencing. Your IAM EAP resource is listed below. Please call

IAM District 141 Employee Assistance Program Director

Bryan Hutchinson

E-Mail: bryanrhutch@aol.com Cell: 303-229-5117

American Airlines Employee Assistance Program Airline Coordinator

Chris Davis

E-mail: chrisx1959@yahoo.com Cell: 704-572-4859

Hawaiian Airlines Employee Assistance Program Airline Coordinator

Maurice Masaki

E-Mail: mmasaki@iam141.org Cell: 808-728-4316

IAM EAP Calendar

EAP I

February 14-19, 2016
William W. Winpisinger Education and
Technology Center

EAP I

March 6-11, 2016
William W. Winpisinger Education and
Technology Center

EAP III

May 22-27, 2016
William W. Winpisinger Education and
Technology Center

EAP II

July 10-15, 2016
William W. Winpisinger Education and
Technology Center

