



The Pros and Cons of Anxiety

Anxiety is a complex emotional state that affects millions of individuals worldwide. While often and correctly seen as a negative experience, anxiety can have both positive and negative aspects. By understanding the potential benefits and drawbacks of anxiety and adopting effective coping strategies, the hope is that you can better manage its impact on your life.

Anxiety can heighten alertness, making us more attuned to potential dangers or threats in our environment. This heightened state of vigilance can help us respond effectively to immediate challenges, promoting our safety and well-being. Oftentimes that fight or flight instinct that plagues us during a presentation at work can keep us sharp if we have to make a choice in the moment. In addition to alertness, anxiety can act as a motivator, compelling us to take action to address the source of our anxiety.

Whether it's completing a task, preparing for an event, or making necessary changes in your life, anxiety can provide the impetus needed to initiate positive change and growth. The feeling of anxiety can drive us to seek solutions, develop creative strategies, and explore alternative perspectives, ultimately enhancing our ability to overcome challenges. Lastly, moderate levels of anxiety can enhance performance in various domains. Known as "optimal anxiety," this state can boost concentration, improve memory retention, and increase motivation, leading to improved academic or professional performance.

Of course, if your anxiety is left unchecked, or becomes overwhelming in proportion to what is causing it, an anxiety disorder can develop. Unfortunately, when we feel highly anxious, it affects not only us but those around us as well, causing us to self isolate, withdrawal, and have difficulty forming

and maintaining relationships. Fear of judgment or criticism may prevent you from engaging in social activities, leading to a sense of loneliness and emotional disconnection. This is how anxiety can lead into a depressive state; you are essentially cut off from the people and activities in your life that would typically alleviate those negative symptoms and bring you some sense of happiness or contentment. Thankfully, there are many ways to work through anxiety, even turning it to your advantage! Many of these techniques you will likely have heard of, and maybe even tried. It is important to note that developing a healthy routine is the best defense against anxiety turning out of control. Practicing mindfulness and meditation techniques can help you become more aware of your anxious thoughts and emotions. By observing them without judgment, you can develop a sense of acceptance and learn to let go of distressing thoughts, promoting a calmer state of mind. Mindfulness isn't about emptying your mind, but rather giving some space between your thoughts and yourself. Some like to imagine they are sitting in the back row of a grand theatre, watching their thoughts and feelings come across the stage and then exit. From this vantage point, you can only be a witness to them, and not interact. This exercise can allow you to create a healthy space to get to know your thoughts without becoming entangled within them.

Alongside mindfulness, adopting a healthy lifestyle can have a significant impact on anxiety levels. Always consider the Big Three: regular exercise, a balanced diet, and sufficient sleep. Set manageable expectations for yourself, allowing for occasional

missteps and room for improvement. Making positive lifestyle changes takes time and energy, and results won't be evident overnight, but with time, you will begin to notice that you feel better about yourself and have fewer moments of high anxiety. Another aspect of positive change involves seeking support from trusted friends, family, or a mental health professional. This can provide you with a sense of validation, comfort, and understanding. Sharing experiences and emotions with others who have gone through similar struggles can be immensely beneficial in coping with anxiety.

Anxiety is a multifaceted experience that has both pros and cons. While it can heighten alertness, motivate action, and promote problem-solving, anxiety can also impair daily functioning, impact mental well-being, and lead to social difficulties. By making some small but key changes in your life, you can work through anxiety and manage its challenges effectively. Remind yourself that the goal is never to erase anxiety from your life, but rather manage it in a way that you can use it to your advantage and not have it be a barrier to what you enjoy doing. It is essential to approach anxiety with compassion, self-care, and a proactive mindset to promote overall well-being and lead a more fulfilling life. This can be difficult to accomplish alone, so if you need help from a mental health professional, please contact Walmsley, and we will be happy to connect you with a counsellor.

Robert Baker, MA RCC
Walmsley EFAP



Being there matters.

Contact Us

1.800.481.5511
info@walmsley.ca

www.walmsley.ca
walmsley.ca/contact-us.html