

# ANXIETY / DEPRESSION: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Document produced in the framework of the partnership between: **BNP Paribas Cardif** and **Rouen-Normandie hospital**

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In a constantly evolving world, **anxiety and depression** are realities that many people unfortunately **face daily**. These disorders can have **multiple repercussions on health** as well as on quality of life.

In this newsletter, we invite you to learn more about **mental health** and to uncover the reality behind some common misconceptions on this topic.

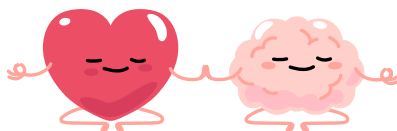
On the last page of this newsletter, we provide a printable **memo** with **various practical exercises to help you better manage your anxiety** on a daily basis.



## What is mental health?

**"Being healthy is not just about not having a disease or infirmity, but it's about experiencing physical, mental, and social well-being" - WHO\***

\*World health organization



**Mental health** is thus an integral part of overall **health** and **well-being**.

### POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH:

- State of well-being
- Sense of fulfillment
- Full use of one's abilities
- Ability to cope with life's challenges

### MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS:

- Disturbances in psychological state
- Emotional and behavioral difficulties
- Feelings of distress

*Examples: Anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorders...*

### DID YOU KNOW?

Approximately  
**1** people / **8**  
worldwide suffers from  
a mental disorder



Nearly  
**1** in **5** French  
is affected by a mental  
disorder



**21 %** of French  
will experience an  
anxiety disorder  
throughout their lifetime



**13%** of French  
will be affected by  
depression



# Common misconceptions about anxiety and depression

## Anxiety & depression: A sign of weakness?

Anyone can suffer from a **mental or physical illness** at some point in their life, regardless of **gender**, **age**, **life experiences**, **intelligence**, or **social class**. Our mental health varies throughout life and can be influenced by several factors:



Our mental health can vary throughout life and can be influenced by **several factors**:

### Biological factors

Sex, age, genetics...



### Health status

Pathologies, metabolic disturbances...



### Personal history

Life events, experiences...



### Lifestyle

Diet, sleep, physical activity...



### Social environment

Family, friends, neighbors, colleagues...



### Living conditions

Housing, professional difficulties...



### Personality

Perfectionism, self-esteem...



All these factors can contribute to disturbing mental health and increasing the risk of anxiety and depression.

**Experiencing mental difficulties is neither a failure, a choice, nor a sign of weakness.**



It is generally complicated to self-diagnose mental disorders, which is why, **in case of difficulties, it is recommended to talk to your doctor**, who is qualified to make a diagnosis.

Sharing your struggles, especially with a healthcare professional, is a sign of strength and **the key to better well-being**.

Furthermore, if you think someone in your circle may be experiencing mental health issues, don't hesitate to discuss it with them, always with kindness.

**In times of difficulty, being compassionate is essential; judging harshly is not the solution. Kindness is the key to flourishing mental health!**



## Anxiety/Depression: A Matter of Willpower?



Nervousness  
/ Stress



Sadness



Guilt



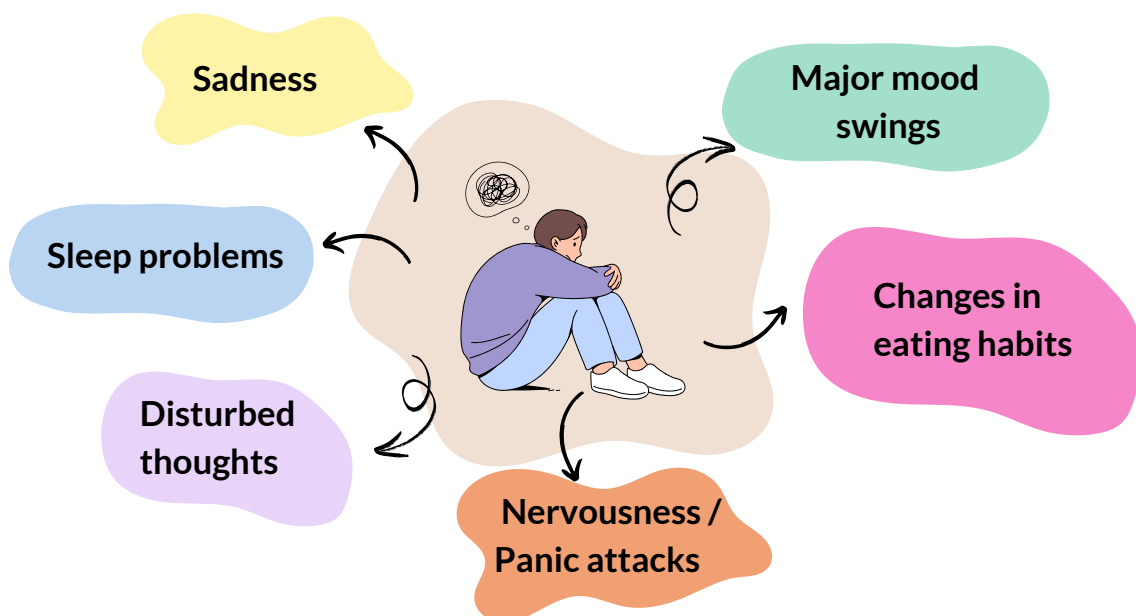
Discouragement /  
Fatigue

Everyone has experienced these feelings at some point...

However, these emotions are most often **temporar** and are normal throughout life. Nevertheless, sometimes **these states persist and significantly disrupt daily life**, which could indicate a mental health disorder.

**Some signs** may alert you to the need for psychological support and professional help:

- **Emotional:** Sadness, fear, stress, nervousness, discouragement, anger, feelings of failure, burnout, irritability...
- **Behavioral:** Changes in eating habits, decreased energy, fatigue, inability to carry out daily activities (reduced leisure), aggression, isolation, substance abuse...
- **Cognitive (Mental):** Difficulties in reasoning normally, disturbed/distorted thoughts, memory issues...
- **Physical:** Headaches, sleep disturbances, visual or auditory perception issues...



When one or more of these signs become **chronic** (last over time), it indicates a high risk of **anxiety** or **depression**. It's important to note that this list is not exhaustive, and other symptoms may exist. If you have any doubts, **we recommend seeking support from a healthcare professional**.



**Anxiety and depression** are disorders associated with biological disruptions (serotonin, dopamine, cortisol levels...). These imbalances explain the symptoms described above by affecting motivation mechanisms and leading to decreased energy and intense fatigue.

**Anxiety and depression are not related to a lack of willpower or laziness, which is why it is essential to seek support from a healthcare professional.**

## Reducing the risk of anxiety/depression: Is it possible?

It is in everyone's interest to take action for their **mental health**, thereby improving their **well-being** and **quality of life**. Mental health and physical health are entirely intertwined, which is why caring for both is essential.

To take care of or improve mental health, there are several actions to consider:

### 1-Adopt a Healthy Lifestyle



Engage in regular **physical activity** (walking, running, swimming, cycling, ...)



Taking care of your **sleep**



Follow a **healthy** and **balanced diet**



Foster **social connections**



Reduce **stimulants**: moderate alcohol and caffeine intake, and stop smoking and using drugs



Take time for **oneself**



Limit screen time and **social media**



Practice **relaxation** techniques and **stress management** such as *mindfulness and meditation...*

### 2- Consult a Health Professional

It is essential to **contact health professionals in cases of psychological distress**. If you have any doubts, **don't wait to talk to a professional**; they are there to advise and help you.

The health professionals who can assist you include:

- **General Practitioner**
- **Occupational Physician**
- **Psychologist**
- **Psychiatrist**



In France numerous free helplines, listening centers, and organizations are dedicated to mental health issues.

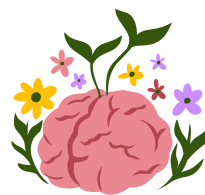
There are likely free helplines you can call at any time for support and a listening ear ; you can easily find this information online or from your general practitioner.



## Conclusion

It is important to raise awareness about **mental health** and its issues to help combat stigma and encourage people of all ages to seek help when they need it.

**Taking care of your mental health and contacting health professionals if you have any doubts is essential.**





# Taking care of your mental health every day!

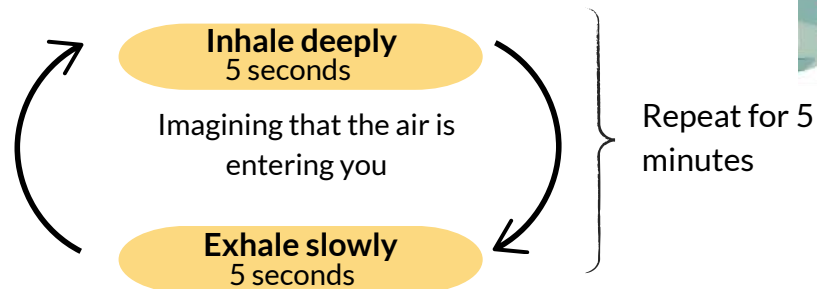


Many activities exist to help you improve your mental well-being. Here are 3 easy-to-implement suggestions:

## 1. HEART COHERENCE

To help you **manage your emotions and anxiety**, heart coherence breathing is a real asset that can easily be practiced daily:

Preferably choose a **quiet place, close your eyes, and relax your body.**

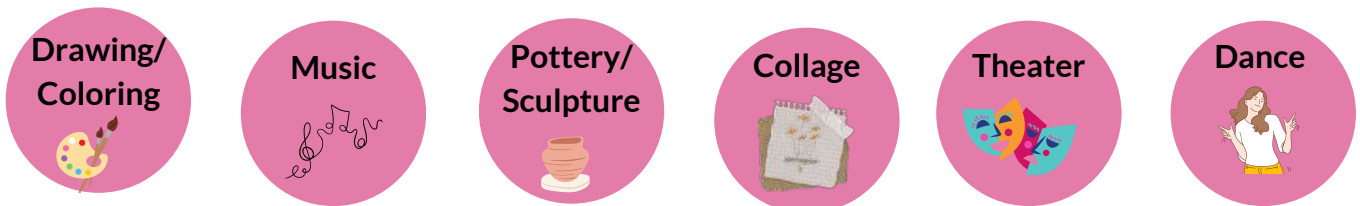


Gradually, your brain activity aligns with your breathing rhythm and calms down progressively.

➤ **Note:** it is recommended to adapt this exercise to your abilities and pace. Feel free to modify the inhalation/exhalation time and the duration of the exercise (e.g., 3 seconds in/3 seconds out for 3 minutes).

## 2. ART THERAPY

Art therapy **stimulates imagination** and allows you to work on your **perceptions of the world and your emotions to liberate yourself**. Here are some examples of activities:



Choose an activity that seems enjoyable and appropriate to you, and set aside some time to practice it.

## 3. MINDFUL WALKING



Mindful walking is an excellent technique for reducing anxiety and clearing your mind while fully enjoying the present moment. The goal is to **pay attention to all your sensations, reconnecting with your body, mind, and breath by focusing on them.**

To do this, take a few deep breaths and walk at a calm pace, being aware of each movement. During your **walk (even if it's just 5 minutes), concentrate on your surroundings (trees, birds, wind, etc.) and your bodily sensations** (feet touching the ground, breath, movement of arms/legs...).

It's very possible that your thoughts will drift, and that's okay; gently bring your attention back to the walk as soon as you can.

**All these activities can be practiced without moderation!!**

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