

Special Newsletter on Anxiety Treatment

First, one can take the GAD-7 rating for an objective estimate of the level of anxiety.

Over the **past two weeks**, how often have you been bothered by the following problems?

Give a score 0, 1, 2 or 3 for each item as follows:

Not at all: 0; Several days: 1; More than half the days: 2; Nearly every day: 3.

Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge: _____

Not being able to stop or control worrying: _____

Worrying too much about different things: _____

Trouble relaxing: _____

Being so restless that it is hard to sit still: _____

Becoming easily annoyed or irritable: _____

Feeling afraid, as if something awful might happen: _____

Total Score: _____

0-4 minimal anxiety; 5-9 mild anxiety; 10-14 moderate anxiety; 15-21 severe anxiety.

If your total score is 10 or more, you have a serious problem with anxiety. You probably already knew that. You may not know that both medication and psychotherapy can be helpful with reducing anxiety. I recommend the following, with further explanation following.

If you are comfortable with online interactions, I recommend that you find a primary therapist or clinic **online** who offers cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT). I recommend that you also coordinate with that therapist or clinic to arrange to be followed by an M.D. psychiatrist for a trial of antidepressant medication at the same time. This possibility should be established at the initial phone contract with the primary therapist or clinic.

As suggested, the medication of choice for anxiety is, strangely, antidepressant medication such as Prozac or Zoloft, and not anti-anxiety drugs such as Valium. While drugs like Valium can reduce anxiety in the short run, with time they require larger dosages to maintain effectiveness, and so can lead to dependence and abuse.

I recommend **online** treatment by the primary therapist primarily because it is cheaper, and not limited by geography. It is, I believe, the wave of the future. Some in-person contact is usually required for medical treatment for several practical reasons, so I do recommend finding a local psychiatrist to monitor medication.

Cognitive-behavioral treatment is rather universally recommended for treatment of anxiety, and seems uniquely suited for this malady, given as this malady is characterized by endless loops of brain activity. While other approaches can also be justified, I suggest avoiding therapists offering analysis, analytic psychotherapy, or Freudian approaches.

Anyone who offers psychotherapy should be licensed in the state in which they practice. In addition to M.D. Psychiatrists, degrees and licenses are appropriate for Ph.D. Psychologists, M.A. Counselors, M.A. or Ph.D. Family Therapists, and M.S.W. Clinical Social Workers. In some states, others such as Psychiatric Nurses are also licensed.

Other resources: In addition to searches for “online cognitive-behavioral therapy,” resources include the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, adaa.org, from which the GAD-7 scoring system above was obtained. For emergencies, call 911. Also, one can call 988 for the national suicide and crisis line.

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