

# Men and Their Emotions: Anxiety

Anxiety is often referred to as “the hidden disease”. Closely associated with the emotions of Sadness and Fear, anxiety is the next in this series about the emotions that prevent us from becoming more godly men.

## Anxiety and Men

Anxiety can happen to anyone, especially in these times of the COVID-19 pandemic, racial injustice, and economic uncertainty.

In 2017, the World Health Organization estimated that 3.6% of the global population – more than 250 million people suffer from an anxiety disorder.

Studies continuously show that women are twice as likely as men to be diagnosed with an anxiety disorder. The data suggests 1 in 3 women and 1 in 5 men will have an anxiety disorder at some point during their lives. Anxiety among children is also rising with 25% of kids between 13 and 18 years old getting treatment of some kind of anxiety or depression.

So while women are often cast as the stereotypical worrier, many men suffer from anxiety, too. We just deal with it differently.

Psychologists and researchers who study anxiety suggest that the statistics for men are underreported since guys are generally less likely to seek help.



Researchers believe this disparity results from guys feeling pressured by cultural norms to not exhibit any anxious feelings since it does not seem masculine.

*"We've been socialized from a very young age to see emotional vulnerability as a weakness,"* says Michael Addis, a professor of psychology and director of the Men's Well-Being Research Group at Clark University in Worcester, Mass. He calls it the "Marlboro man" model of masculinity. *"Seeking help is seen as a sign of weakness as well,"* for some men, Addis says.

Stefan Hofmann, PHD and director of the Psychotherapy and Emotion Research Laboratory at Boston University's Center for

Anxiety and Related Disorders, says *"We are taught in our upbringing to not cry, to suck it up, to be a man. That is very much linked to how emotions are being treated."*

But while some men do seek out therapy, others suppress their anxious feelings and even deny anything is wrong. Concerningly, data shows men are four times more likely than women to die from suicide due to anxiety and depression.

*"That silence is a killer,"* Addis says. *"Because so few men in everyday life are talking to each other about this kind of stuff, we all harbor this illusion that when we get stressed and anxious, we're the only ones. And I think that's a widespread misperception about what's actually going on."*

So let's define guilt and shame to better understand how these emotions play into a man's role.

## **Anxiety Defined**

In the U.S., anxiety is the most common mental illness in the U.S., affecting 40 million adults or nearly 1 in 5 people age 18 or older. Since many people who suffer from depression symptoms also suffer from anxiety, and vice versa, it's difficult to reliably and consistently diagnose each disorder. While anxiety disorders are highly treatable, only 36.9% who suffer actually receive treatment.



According to the American Psychological Association, anxiety is defined as an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts, and physical changes.

Merriam Webster defines anxiety as “apprehensive uneasiness or nervousness usually over an impending or anticipated ill”.

The Anxiety & Depression Association of America (ADAA) describes several types of anxiety disorders including:

- Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) is the most common form of anxiety disorder, characterized by long-lasting anxiety which can occur in any setting and situation. Often the person doesn't even know what they're feeling anxious about.
- Panic Disorder (PD) is characterized by short, intense attacks of terror. These are harmless but often misinterpreted as an indication that something catastrophic is about to happen. It's easily treatable through psychological therapy.
- Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD) is a common disorder and linked to fears that others are judging us negatively. Turns out the being liked and accepted is a big deal for

all humans so it's a common thing to worry about.

Other forms of anxiety disorders and phobias include:

- Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Paranoia □

## **Environmental and Physiological Reaction to Anxiety**

Medically, anxiety is an abnormal and overwhelming sense of apprehension and fear often marked by physical signs (such as tension, sweating, and increased pulse rate), by doubt concerning the reality and nature of the threat, and by self-doubt about one's capacity to cope with it.

Its physical and emotional symptoms include:

- Excessive sweating
- Muscle tension
- Racing or pounding heart
- Restlessness or agitation
- Dizziness
- Panic attacks
- Insomnia
- Shortness of breath
- Feelings of choking
- Feelings of fear, dread, panic, and stress
- Problems with concentration
- Feeling irritable or edgy

- Doom and gloom thinking
- Constant worrying
- Being extra cautious to avoid danger
- Fear of not being in control
- Being absent-minded

People often use the terms worry and anxiety interchangeably, but they are very different psychological states.

PsychologyToday.com describes those in 10 Crucial Differences Between Worry and Anxiety such as we experience worry in our heads and anxiety in our bodies, worry tends to be specific while anxiety is more diffuse, worry is verbally focused while anxiety includes verbal thoughts and mental imagery, worry often triggers problem-solving but anxiety does not, and worry tends to be a temporary state but anxiety can linger.

Generally speaking, the differences are summarized best as:

*Worry happens in your mind, stress happens in your body, and anxiety happens in your mind and your body.*

*–The Difference Between Worry, Stress and Anxiety, New York Times*

While a small amount of anxiety and stress is normal from time to time, a problem arises if it starts negatively impacting your daily life.

## What the Bible says about Anxiety

Some turn to music, art, exercise, or books as a source to relieve anxiety and stress but many also turn to the Bible. Scripture reinforces the fact that God will help us persevere through challenging times and that He always walks alongside us.



If you are struggling with anxiety, feeling nervous and

unsure, or are just plain old stressed-out, here are some Bible verses about anxiety that can help remind you that you are never alone and that anxiety will not last forever.

*“And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?”, “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”*

*–Matthew 6:27, 34*

*“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*

*–Philippians 4:6-7*

*“An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up.”*

*– Proverbs 12:25*

*Casting all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you.*

*–1 Peter 5:7 ESV*

*“Say to those who have an anxious heart, ‘Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the*



*recompense of God. He will come and save you.'"*

*–Isaiah 35:4*

## **How God Buddies Respond to Anxiety**

For a man struggling with anxiety, opening up about it is an act of courage, not a weakness. But you should also not deal with anxiety alone.

A study of gender differences from Columbia University shows that men were more likely than women to experience relationship strain from anxiety. This could be because women are more likely to have a close circle of friends, whereas men tend to have very few confidants who provide support through emotional distress.

For this reason, I suggest you lean on your God Buddy during stressful times. If you are spending time together with your GB, he will likely notice any changes in your behaviors whether its anger, drinking or drug abuse, and excess moodiness.

Your GB can also pray with you when you are anxious. Speaking with God and reading Scripture can help ease your worries.

Your God Buddy can also get you out for some exercise to ease your anxiety. Go for a walk or play a round of golf together. Just get on your bike to get outside for some much-needed fresh air and sunshine. This also gets you away from the

routines of life, social media, and talking heads on TV that may cause your anxiety.

**IMPORTANT: Of course, if your anxiety is out of control, please, please, please see a doctor or psychologist. DO NOT DEAL WITH ANXIETY ALONE!**

I also strongly suggest you NOT go out for a drink with your God Buddy when you are feeling anxious. Medicating is a dangerous doorway to addiction and many guys tend to forego professional treatment by using alcohol and drugs to relieve their anxiety. DON'T DO IT!

Next up in the emotion of Boredom.