

# **ANXIETY & DEPRESSION**

THE HOLISTIC GUIDE TO TREATING  
ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION



## **Anxiety and Depression: The holistic guide to treating anxiety and depression**

I work a lot with people who are suffering with anxiety or depression or both. Having an understanding of some of the factors that cause these emotional challenges can be very important and can lead us to better interventions to help alleviate these conditions.

Medications can sometimes be very important.

I am not a physician so my disclaimer is that I am not an expert when it comes to medications. Nor am I a nutritionist so my disclaimer is that I am not an expert when it comes to supplements.

However because I work so much in this area with people that suffer from these problems and also because I do have a decent knowledge of holistic treatments for medication and anxiety, here is a brief guide for the different factors and interventions that can lead to anxiety and depression.

I am sometimes lumping anxiety and depression together because anxiety and depression have similar neurotransmitter properties. In other words, people that are out of balance in their brain chemistry often have elements of both anxiety and depression.

When I want to speak specifically to one or the other, I will specify.

### **Drug treatments that research has shown to be effective:**

**Most commonly prescribed: Selective serotonin reuptake Inhibitors such as Prozac, Zoloft, Celexa and Lexapro have all shown to be effective to manage depression.**

The key to its effectiveness is to increase the amount of time the neurotransmitter-serotonin is in the synapses of your nervous system which will often times increase the ability to self soothe and to have more peace and less depression. These drugs can oftentimes take the edge off someone who is anxious as well because like I said before, anxiety and depression do have a relationship.

**Other medication for depression: Without going into a lot of detail, I will say that different people tend to respond better to different drugs in the same class (such as SSRI's) and different people respond better to a totally different type of**

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antidepressants with different mechanisms of action.

Some people respond to drugs that affect 2 neurotransmitters such as norepinephrine and serotonin rather than one that affects one neurotransmitter. Some respond to Wellbutrin which is a medication that elevates one's level of usable dopamine. Some do best with a combination of an SSRI in combination with Wellbutrin.

In other words, you need to see your doctor/psychiatrist to see what your medical professional suggests for your particular situation.

There are saliva tests out there that are getting traction that could help pinpoint what medications might be best for you. Medications all have side effects and those side effects must be considered. However, sometimes the side effects of NOT taking the medications could be worse. (This was not at all an exhaustive list of medications; rather a brief introduction and description of drug treatments that are out there)

**For anxiety specifically, you need to ask your doctor. Some of the commonly prescribed drugs for anxiety, such as Xanax, Klonopin or Ativan can be helpful but can also be addictive.**

## **Non-drug treatments for anxiety & depression:**

### **Exercise:**

Much research is starting to show the benefits of exercise with alleviating anxiety and depression. I heard one researcher say that if they could take the benefits of exercise and put it in a pill, it would be the best selling pill of all time.

**Consistent moderate exercise seems to be the sweet spot to help mental health symptoms.**

### **Fish Oils:**

An excellent study on depression featured an African tribe that had very difficult lives as a people and yet had low levels of depression. One of the things the researchers discovered was that these Africans had a one-to-one ratio of Omega-3 fish oils to omega-6 fish oils in their diet. Omega-6 is pro-inflammatory whereas omega-3 is anti-inflammatory.

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The typical American diet they found a 16 to 1 ratio of omega-6 to omega-3. Therefore there was a lot more inflammation.

**When Americans take fish oils and watch their diet they could get the ratio down to 2 to 1 or 3 to 1 and those ratios seem to be significantly helpful to heal from depression.**

## **Meaningful connection with others**

As a couples therapist, I have seen clearly how having meaningful and close connections with family members, spouses, children and friends can be great buffers against the stressors in life and ultimately can help people heal from or prevent people from getting depression.

## **Meditation and other activities which evoke one's "beingness."**

Research has demonstrated that people that consistently take time out of the day- even as little as 10 minutes per day to meditate or just take a pause from getting caught up in thinking and constant activity, become resilient against depression or heal from depression as well as anxiety.

Some activities that do this besides meditation are moving meditations such as yoga or Tai Chi.

Mindfulness in everyday life does this as well.

Mindfulness is living life by paying attention and noticing and living in the present moment. These activities help us get in touch with our deepest selves; we learn that who we are is not just about productivity or reacting to circumstances. We have a rich inner life and can experience higher levels of peace and self-compassion. This, of course is a great antidote to stress, anxiety and depression.

**People that consistently do these anti-ruminative types of activities seem able to access that part of them that can be naturally healing and unconditionally loving.**

## **Diet:**

There is an increasing amount of research being done. What we put into our mouths can significantly affect our level of mental well-being. Eating an anti-inflammatory diet, will definitely prevent or help people heal

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from depression or anxiety.

There is much conflict about what's the best kind of diet but one thing is very clear.

**The less sugar you eat, the better.** I would recommend you watching the video “Fed Up” which does a wonderful job of showing you how big food companies and government have made it difficult for us because of the lack of regulation regarding sugar in all kinds of foods.

Sugar can be addictive and the more sugar we eat, the more inflamed we are and this can definitely affect our mental health and well-being.

People are realizing through research that eating too much bread and other grains can be problematic because they break down into sugar.

According to the movie Fed Up, the worst kinds of sugar foods are those that have no or very little fiber. That is why an apple is not nearly as bad to eat as compared to apple juice. There is more fiber by far in an apple versus juice.

**Again, consult your nutritionist or physician. However I have seen results in my life and my family's lives and in my clients lives where changing diets can greatly improve mood and energy.**

## **Healthy sleep:**

Many Americans do not sleep enough or they go to bed too late and they do not get the best kind of sleep.

Research is showing that going to bed earlier and at a regular consistent time and getting up early is the best inoculation against depression and anxiety.

**Sleep keeps your cortisol levels lower and it keeps your energy higher. More and more research is demonstrating the absolutely essential health benefits of good sleep.**

## **Supplements and vitamins:**

Many of the B vitamins can be very calming and anti-inflammatory to our body. B12 can be very energizing and is often times used to alleviate the energy lows that come with depression. There are other supplements including herbal remedies that can

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be used to combat depression and anxiety. Sam E and St. John's Wort are two natural remedies that people use for depression. GABA supplements come in various forms that can be used to alleviate anxiety.

Again, this is my list and does not substitute for medical advice. Feel free to use it as a guide when discussing options with your physician.

### **Todd Creager is an experienced relationship therapist & coach**

*He specializes in marriage, sex and couples counseling.*

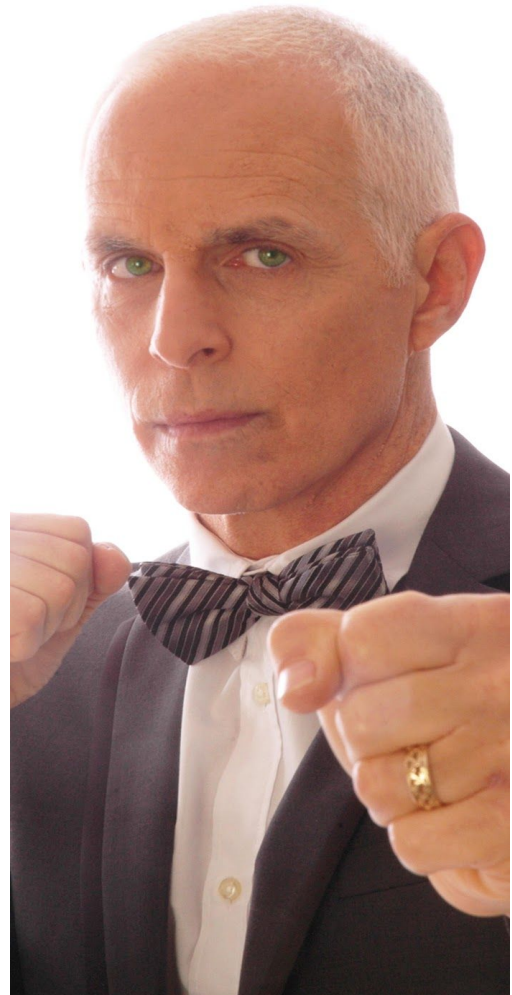
From increasing intimacy, to a 90% success rate helping couples overcome infidelity, Todd has helped countless couples beat the issues that they face and as a result develop a deeper more satisfying relationship with their partner.

Author of the Long Hot Marriage, Love, Sex and Karaoke: 52 Ways to Ignite your Love

Life, Todd spends much of his time helping long-term partners create passionate & thriving relationships.

He provides unique and powerful insights that lead to breakthroughs which result in his clients getting closer to each other and getting the love they want.

*Need help? Todd can work with you in person, via phone or skype.*



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