

## Laura Kastner's Big Five for Anxiety Management

1. **Become a relaxation expert.** We all *think* we know how to relax. But chilling out in front of the TV or computer isn't true relaxation. (Depending on what you're watching or doing, it could even make you more tense.) The same is true for alcohol, drugs, or tobacco. They may seem to relieve anxiety or stress, but it's a false state of relaxation that's only temporary. What the body really needs is a relaxation technique — like deep breathing, tai chi, or yoga — that has a physical effect on the mind. For example, deep breathing helps to relax a major nerve that runs from the diaphragm to the brain, sending a message to the entire body to let go and loosen up.
2. **Get enough sleep, nourishment, and exercise.** Want your mind and body to feel peaceful and strong enough to handle life's ups and downs? Get the right amount of sleep for your needs — not too much or too little. Eat well: Choose fruit, vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains for long-term energy (instead of the short bursts that come from too much sugar or caffeine). And exercise to send oxygen to every cell in the body so your brain and body can operate at their best.
3. **Connect with others.** Spend time with friends or family. Organized activities are great, but just hanging out works too. Doing things with those we feel close to deepens our bonds, allowing us to feel supported and secure. And the fun and sharing that go with it allow us to feel happier and less upset about things. If you feel worried or nervous about something, talking about it with someone who listens and cares can help you feel more understood and better able to cope. You'll be reminded that everyone has these feelings sometimes. You're not alone.
4. **Connect with nature.** Heading out for a walk in the park or a hike in the woods can help anyone feel peaceful and grounded. (Choose somewhere you feel safe so you can relax and enjoy your surroundings.) Walking, hiking, trail biking, or snowshoeing offer the additional benefit of exercise. Invite a friend or two — or a family member — along and enjoy feeling connected to people as well.
5. **Think positive.** A great way to keep our minds off the worry track is to focus our thoughts on things that are good, beautiful, and positive. Allow yourself to dream, wish, and imagine the best that could happen.