What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a very normal feeling that helps us get out of harm's way and prepare for important events, and it warns us when we need to take action. During college it is not uncommon to feel more anxious since being away from home, prior to an exam, or when planning your future. However, if you experience anxiety that is persistent, seemingly uncontrollable, and overwhelming, it may be too excessive. This level of anxiety can be disabling, intrusive, and can affect your overall quality of life.

Symptoms

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College Facts

Anxiety disorders are one of the most common mental health problems on college campuses. Forty million U.S. adults suffer from an anxiety disorder, and 75 percent of them experience their first episode of anxiety by age 22.

More than 11 percent of college students have been diagnosed or treated for anxiety in the past year.

In an American College Health Association report released in 2011, students cited depression and anxiety as among the top impediments to academic performance.

Anxiety affects us in many ways, physically, emotionally, and behaviorally. By recognizing the signs of anxiety, one can be less afraid and manage more effectively.
Tips for coping

Control your worry. Focus on what is happening, not what if. Understand what is in your control, and what is not in your control.

Relax. Figure out what relaxation means to you and how you can achieve a feeling of calmness on a daily basis. Some suggestions may include yoga, listening to music, or watching TV.

Deep breathing.
1. Sit or stand with good posture.
2. Breathe through your nose.
3. Inhale, filling first the lower part of your lungs then the middle part, then the upper part.
4. Hold your breath for a few seconds.
5. Exhale slowly. Relax your abdomen and chest.

Exercise. Daily exercise, even simply walking to class, can increase your feelings of well-being and reduce the amount of stress we feel.

Sleep. Adequate amounts of sleep will allow for your mind and body to recharge and feel refreshed.

Avoid alcohol and drug use. Substances may appear to provide immediate relief from anxiety, but over time, alcohol and drug use will only make your anxiety worse.

Avoid caffeine. Caffeine stimulates your nervous system, and may increase your anxiety. Especially limit your coffee, tea, and soda intake.

HELP is available on campus

BU Student Health Services-Behavioral Medicine
617-353-3569
http://www.bu.edu/shs/behavioral/

All On Campus Resources
http://www.bu.edu/shs/resources/bewell/

Mental Health Emergencies: Call 617-353-3569.