



## Anxiety Self-Help Tips for College Students

**“Cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.”** – 1 Peter 5:7 (NIV). This biblical exhortation speaks directly to the heart of many Christian college students today. Anxiety has become **alarmingly common on college campuses**, affecting believers and non-believers alike. In fact, recent surveys show that around **41% of college students report symptoms of anxiety**, and nearly half have experienced anxiety so overwhelming it felt hard to function <sup>1</sup>. If you are a college student struggling with anxiety while trying to live a joyful Christian life, you are **not alone**, and there is hope. This guide will provide **practical, clinically-supported self-help tips** – all reinforced with scriptural wisdom – to help you manage anxiety and deepen your relationship with Jesus Christ in the midst of college pressures.

### Understanding Anxiety in College (Mind, Body, and Spirit)

**What is anxiety?** At its core, anxiety is a **natural human response** to perceived danger or stress. God designed our bodies with a “fight-or-flight” system – when we sense a threat, our **autonomic nervous system** kicks in to help us survive. Our heart rate spikes, breathing quickens, muscles tense, and adrenaline flows. These physical symptoms of anxiety (racing heart, sweating, upset stomach, etc.) are the body’s normal reaction to stress. *“Anxiety in a man’s heart weighs it down”* (Proverbs 12:25), the Bible observes, acknowledging the heavy toll it can take.

In a college setting, triggers for anxiety abound: **demanding coursework, exams, social pressures, life transitions, financial worries**, and more. It’s no surprise that college students report some of the highest stress levels of any age group <sup>2</sup>. One study found over **54% of students struggled with anxiety** as a top mental health challenge <sup>3</sup>. This anxiety often goes beyond ordinary worry – it can become **constant and disproportionate**, interfering with sleep, concentration, and daily life. Chronic anxiety even impacts the body’s health, **disrupting the balance of the nervous system and weakening the immune system** <sup>4</sup>. In other words, **anxiety isn’t “just in your head”** – it affects your whole being, physical and emotional.

**Is anxiety a lack of faith?** Some Christians feel ashamed of their anxiety, fearing it means their faith is weak. It’s important to debunk this misconception right away. The Bible does say *“Do not be anxious about anything”* (Philippians 4:6), but this is intended as an encouragement to trust God, **not a condemnation** of those who struggle. Even strong believers experienced intense anxiety and despair in Scripture: **David** often cried out in fear in the Psalms, **Elijah** despaired under the broom tree, and **Jesus Himself sweat blood in agony** in Gethsemane (Luke 22:44). Having anxiety does **not** mean you are a “bad Christian” or that you don’t trust God enough.

Focus on the Family, a Christian counseling ministry, puts it this way: *“To say that a person with an anxiety disorder should simply trust God more is like telling a person with a broken bone that she should just have greater faith, and she will be well.”* Just as we wouldn’t scold someone with a fractured leg for feeling pain, we shouldn’t shame someone for feeling anxious <sup>5</sup> <sup>6</sup>. Anxiety disorders often have **medical and psychological components**. Telling someone to “just pray it away” is as misguided as telling a diabetic to stop insulin and just have faith <sup>7</sup>. **God cares about our whole being – body and soul** (Matthew 10:28), and He provides multiple avenues of help for us.



**Body-and-Spirit Perspective:** Christianity teaches that human beings are a **unity of body, mind, and spirit** (Genesis 2:7). We are *“fearfully and wonderfully made”* (Psalm 139:14), with intricate bodies and inner spirits. Because of this, addressing anxiety often requires a **holistic approach**. A biblical counselor notes that **attending to both physical and spiritual aspects** is vital: *“There’s never a time we are not spiritually engaged, and there’s never a time we are not bodily engaged”* <sup>8</sup> <sup>9</sup>. Your **spiritual life and mental health are interconnected**. Anxiety can have biological causes (like brain chemistry or genetics) *and* spiritual causes (like fear of the future or trying to control what only God can). Don’t hesitate to tackle it on **all fronts** – through faith **and** through practical self-care and, when needed, professional care. In the sections that follow, we’ll explore strategies that span **prayer and Scripture, wise thinking and therapy techniques, lifestyle changes**, and appropriate **medical help**. All are gifts from God for our well-being.

## Biblical Wisdom for Anxious Hearts

The **Bible has much to say about anxiety**, worry, and fear – which tells us that God knows this is a common human struggle. Importantly, the tone of Scripture’s teaching on anxiety is **compassionate and hopeful**. Over and over, God reassures His people of His presence and care:

- **“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”** – *Philippians 4:6-7*. This verse not only commands us not to remain anxious, but also gives the antidote: **prayer with thanksgiving**. When we feel worry rising, God invites us to **turn our cares into prayers**. We can *“present [our] requests to God”* – literally handing off the burden to Him – and *“the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard [our] hearts and minds in Christ Jesus”* (Phil 4:7). Many believers can testify that sincere prayer in anxious moments brings an unexplainable peace. We’ll discuss prayer more in the next section.
- **“Humble yourselves... casting all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you.”** – *1 Peter 5:6-7*. Notice that Scripture acknowledges we have **anxieties to cast** – having cares is part of life. God’s solution is not to pretend we have no worries, but to **“cast”** them onto the strong shoulders of Christ. *He cares for you* personally. Try visualizing laying each specific worry at Jesus’ feet in prayer, trusting that He will handle them. This act of surrender is both spiritually and psychologically powerful.
- **“Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will help you.”** – *Isaiah 41:10*. Over **300 times** in the Bible, God says “Fear not!” <sup>10</sup>. He isn’t scolding us – He’s reassuring us. Our Father knows that we *will* feel fear, but He wants us to remember *His presence with us*. Whenever anxiety about the future grips you, recall God’s promise: *I am with you*. You are not facing your fears alone; the all-powerful Creator is by your side, promising to strengthen and help you.
- **“And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ... Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.** Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, **for tomorrow will worry about itself.”** – *Matthew 6:27-34*. Jesus devoted a whole portion of the Sermon on the Mount to addressing worry. He gently points out that **worry is unproductive** – it doesn’t solve the problem (it “adds no hour” to your life) – and it distracts from what matters most (God’s kingdom). Christ isn’t downplaying our needs; rather, He reminds us that *“your Heavenly Father knows”* exactly what you need (Matt 6:32) and will provide in His timing. **Living one day at a time** in trust is a biblical key to overcoming anxious thoughts about the future.

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- **“God gave us a spirit not of fear, but of power and love and a sound mind.”** – 2 Timothy 1:7. Fear does not ultimately come from God. The more His Spirit fills us, the more we experience power, love, and a **sound mind** (or “self-control,” as some translations say). This doesn’t mean a faithful Christian will never feel afraid – but it means fear is not our master. We can ask God’s Spirit to fill our mind with **soundness and peace** when we feel panic creeping in.
- **“The joy of the Lord is your strength.”** – Nehemiah 8:10. Anxiety often tries to rob us of joy. But the Bible reveals that **joy is a source of strength**. This joy isn’t a superficial happiness; it’s a deep gladness in knowing God’s love and salvation. Even in trials, *“rejoice in the Lord always”* (Philippians 4:4) is possible, as the Apostle Paul demonstrated while writing from prison. Cultivating joy through worship, gratitude, and fellowship can act as a **shield against anxiety**. We’ll explore practical ways to do this shortly.

**Faith vs. anxiety – not either/or:** It’s worth repeating: feeling anxiety does **not** make you a “bad Christian.” Anxiety can tempt us to doubt God’s goodness or constant care, but experiencing that temptation is not a sin in itself – it’s an opportunity. Each anxious thought can become a cue to *“turn your worry into worship”*. For example, when you start to think “What if I fail this exam and ruin my future?”, you can catch that thought and respond with prayer: “Lord, I feel afraid of failure. But I trust You have a plan for my life. Help me do my best and leave the results with You.” This aligns with the biblical instruction to *“take every thought captive to obey Christ”* (2 Corinthians 10:5). Over time, diligently **reframing anxious thoughts in light of God’s truth** will retrain your mind (Romans 12:2). We’ll look at some of these **thought management techniques** (which mirror cognitive-behavioral therapy principles) in the next section.

Before moving on, remember Jesus’s tender invitation: **“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”** (Matthew 11:28). The ultimate rest from our anxieties is found in drawing near to Christ. He does not break the bruised reed or snuff out the smoldering wick (Matthew 12:20) – meaning He handles our fragile, anxious hearts with gentleness. As we proceed to practical tips, keep this foundational truth in view: **God is for you and with you in this battle** against anxiety.

## Faith-Based Coping Strategies for Anxiety

Drawing on your **Christian faith** is a powerful way to cope with anxiety. Studies have shown that **spiritual practices like prayer can positively impact mental health** for many people, especially when those prayers reinforce trust in God’s love <sup>11</sup> <sup>12</sup>. Here are some faith-based strategies to help calm your anxious heart:

- **Pray Continually – with Honesty and Thanksgiving:** The Apostle Paul’s advice in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 is simply *“pray without ceasing.”* This doesn’t mean walking around reciting formal prayers 24/7; it means maintaining an ongoing conversation with God, **especially when anxious thoughts arise**. When you start to feel panicky or worried, **take a prayer break**. It can be as simple as breathing in and praying, “Lord, I give You this worry about [X],” and breathing out, “Fill me with Your peace.” Some Christians use breath-prayers or short verses to refocus on God in anxious moments. For example, inhale saying, *“Be still and know that I am God”* (Psalm 46:10), exhale saying, *“You are with me.”* The exact words are less important than the **attitude of turning our minds Godward** instead of spiraling inward.



It's okay if your prayers repeat the same plea – *"Help me, Jesus"* said sincerely is a valid prayer. As one student advises, try praying for at least a few minutes each time anxiety surges, **even if you have to repeat yourself** <sup>13</sup>. Pour out your feelings honestly – the Psalms set a great example of this. King David didn't sugarcoat his anxieties; he said things like *"When anxieties multiplied within me, Your comforts delight my soul"* (Psalm 94:19). Emulate that pattern: tell God *"Lord, my anxieties are multiplying within me"*, and then ask Him to bring the comfort of His promises to your soul. **End with thanksgiving** as Philippians 4:6 instructs – find at least one thing to thank God for in the midst of your stress. Gratitude is a potent anxiety antidote (more on this below). Over time, consistent prayer will build an inner resilience and remind you that **you're never tackling anxiety alone** – God is right there with you, ready to help.

- **Meditate on Scripture and God's Promises:** When worry runs rampant, counter it by **filling your mind with God's Word**. Jesus, when anxious before the cross, quoted Scripture (Psalm 22) as He prayed. We too can anchor our minds in reassuring verses. Try writing out a few key scriptures about peace and courage on notecards or in a notes app. Verses like *John 14:27* ("Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you... Let not your hearts be troubled") or *Isaiah 26:3* ("You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in You") can serve as truth anchors. In moments of panic, **speak these verses out loud** if you can. Hearing truth in your own voice can interrupt the cycle of fearful thoughts.

Another practical exercise is to do a **Bible study on anxiety**. Many Bibles have concordances; look up "anxiety" or "fear" and read the related passages. Notice God's character in those passages – His faithfulness, His commands *and* comforts. For example, *Joshua 1:9* says *"Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."* Studying this, you might journal: "God is with me in the exam room, in my dorm, everywhere. I have a reason to be courageous." Repeating that truth to yourself can gradually replace the reflex of fear with a reflex of faith.

Many students find it helpful to **memorize a life verse** that combats their specific anxious thoughts. If you fear failure, maybe Philippians 4:13 (*"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me"*) or Psalm 73:26 (*"God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever"*). If you worry about being alone, Hebrews 13:5 (*"I will never leave you nor forsake you"*). When an anxious thought pops up, **quote your verse** – out loud if possible. This is effectively a spiritual **"thought-stopping"** technique, replacing the worry with God's Word. The more you do it, the more automatic it becomes. As Psalm 119:92 says, *"If Your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction."* Let Scripture become your delight and lifeline in anxious times.

- **Worship and Praise:** It may seem counterintuitive, but *praising God* in the midst of anxiety can powerfully shift your perspective. In 2 Chronicles 20, when Jehoshaphat's people were afraid of a vast army, they **began to sing and praise God**, and God delivered them. Worship has a way of **shrinking our problems** and magnifying our view of God. Make a playlist of worship songs or hymns that speak of trust, peace, and God's faithfulness. Sing along (even quietly to yourself) when anxiety flares up. The act of singing deep, truth-filled lyrics helps regulate breathing and engages the brain's emotion centers in a positive way. It's physical and spiritual therapy at once! As one example, the song "It Is Well" (with lyrics like *"When sorrows like sea billows roll... it is well with my soul"*) can remind you that your soul's well-being in Christ is secure despite external turmoil. **Dancing David-style** (2 Samuel 6:14) in your room or lifting your hands in praise can also release some of the tension anxiety builds up. Don't worry about how you look; focus on **offering God praise** and you'll



often find your mood lightened. God *“inhabits the praises”* of His people (Psalm 22:3), meaning His comforting presence draws near when we worship.

- **Fellowship and Sharing Burdens:** Anxiety often makes us want to withdraw from others, but isolating yourself tends to worsen worry. Scripture urges us to **seek community**: *“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ”* (Galatians 6:2). Sometimes, simply talking with a trusted Christian friend, mentor, or pastor about what’s making you anxious will bring relief. They can pray with you and remind you of truth when you’re feeling shaky. If you’re involved in a campus ministry or church group, consider asking if anyone else struggles with anxiety – you might be surprised how many nod their heads. Starting an **accountability or prayer partner** relationship focused on mental health can be very helpful. For example, you and a friend could agree to check in weekly, share your anxiety challenges, and pray for each other. This breaks the power of secret worry and fulfills James 5:16, *“confess your faults to one another and pray for one another; that you may be healed.”*

Also, don’t hesitate to lean on the **professionals in your faith community**. Many Christian universities have **counseling services with a biblical worldview** <sup>14</sup>. If your college is faith-based (or even if not), seek out counselors or advisors who respect your faith. Talking to a campus counselor or a pastor **is not a sign of weakness – it’s wisdom**. They can provide guidance, coping skills, and spiritual encouragement. Even the Apostle Paul had **Luke, a physician**, as a ministry companion to tend to physical needs (Colossians 4:14). Likewise, a Christian counselor can tend to your emotional and spiritual needs. God often works **through** His people to bring healing. Don’t try to carry your burdens alone when help is available; as Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 says, *“Woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!”*

- **Focus on God’s Love and Identity in Christ:** Anxiety can flood us with negative thoughts – *“I’m going to fail,” “I’m not good enough,” “Everything is out of control.”* It’s crucial to counter these lies with the truth of **who God is and who you are in Christ**. The Bible says, *“Perfect love casts out fear”* (1 John 4:18). Meditating on God’s perfect love for you will gradually push fear aside. When you feel anxious about being accepted or meeting expectations, remind yourself: *I am God’s beloved child* (1 John 3:1). *Nothing can separate me from His love* (Romans 8:38-39). When you fear the unknown future, remember: *God is sovereign and good* (Psalm 100:5), *His plans for me are for hope and a future* (Jeremiah 29:11).

A practical tip is to **write a list of truth statements** based on Scripture that affirm God’s care and your secure identity. For example: *“God is with me wherever I go”* (Joshua 1:9), *“God’s grace is sufficient for me”* (2 Corinthians 12:9), *“I am not a slave to fear; I’m a child of God”* (Romans 8:15). Keep this list in your journal or phone. When self-doubts or catastrophic thoughts hit, read the list out loud or in your head. Over time, **cultivating a habit of recalling God’s love and truth** will reshape your mental patterns. Christian psychologists note that this practice aligns well with cognitive-behavioral techniques – essentially **replacing distorted thoughts with truth-based thoughts**. The difference is we draw our “truth replacements” from God’s eternal Word, which carries a unique power to renew the mind (Hebrews 4:12).

**Important Caution:** While engaging your faith, guard against using spiritual practices in an *anxious* way. For instance, praying repeatedly *only* for reassurance (*“God, please tell me it will be okay”* over and over) can sometimes feed anxiety if done compulsively <sup>15</sup>. The goal is **prayer that builds trust**, not prayer that acts as a ritual checking mechanism. If you find yourself more anxious after prayer, you may be focusing on your





fears rather than on God's character. Try shifting to praise or read a psalm aloud to break that cycle. Faith is not about controlling outcomes (which we cannot do) but about trusting the One who ultimately **controls all things for our good** (Romans 8:28).

In summary, **leaning into your relationship with Christ is central** to overcoming anxiety. Use the **tools of faith** – prayer, Scripture, worship, community – liberally. They will not eliminate all stress (Jesus said we will have trouble in this world, John 16:33), but they will change how you *experience* and *handle* that stress. As you practice these spiritual disciplines, you should begin to notice the promise of Isaiah 26:3 coming true: *"You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You."*

## Taking Care of Your Temple: Healthy Habits to Calm Anxiety

While spiritual strategies are foundational, Christians recognize that we live in physical bodies that need care. **Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit** (1 Corinthians 6:19), and caring for it is part of honoring God. Many anxiety symptoms can be relieved by giving your body and brain the conditions they need to function optimally. Here are some **evidence-based lifestyle changes** and relaxation techniques that help manage anxiety:

- **Prioritize Sleep:** Adequate sleep is like a reset button for an anxious brain. When we sleep, our brains process emotional stress and calm the overactive amygdala (the fear center). In college, it's tempting to sacrifice sleep to study or socialize, but consistently short-changing sleep will amplify anxiety. Research on college students shows a strong link between lack of sleep and mental health struggles – **over 75% of students get less than 8 hours of sleep**, and this sleep deprivation correlates with heightened anxiety and poorer academic performance <sup>16</sup> <sup>17</sup> . Make it a goal to get **7-9 hours of sleep per night**. To improve sleep quality, establish a calming **bedtime routine**: dim the lights, avoid screens for 30 minutes before bed (blue light can keep your mind buzzing), maybe read a relaxing book or do some gentle stretches, and say a prayer to entrust the night to God's care. As King David prayed, *"In peace I will lie down and sleep, for You alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety"* (Psalm 4:8). If racing thoughts keep you up, keep a notepad by your bed – jot down your worries (to deal with tomorrow) and intentionally release them to God for the night. Adequate rest will make a **world of difference** in your anxiety levels; you'll likely find it easier to face challenges when your body and mind are refreshed.
- **Get Moving – Exercise and Physical Activity:** It's well established in research that **regular exercise is one of the most effective natural antianxiety treatments**. Physical activity releases endorphins (feel-good brain chemicals), reduces stress hormones like cortisol, and improves sleep – all of which reduce anxiety symptoms <sup>18</sup> <sup>19</sup> . A recent meta-analysis found that structured exercise programs had a **significant anxiety-reducing effect on college students**, with a *large* impact size ( $d = -0.83$ ) <sup>20</sup> <sup>21</sup> . This is a bigger effect than many medications! Exercise, especially **mind-body exercises** (like jogging, swimming, dance, or activities incorporating breathing and mindfulness such as yoga or tai chi), can "burn off" excess adrenaline and tension. Aim for at least **30 minutes of moderate exercise most days** – but even a 10-minute brisk walk between classes can help. Many students notice that on days they work out or take a long walk, they feel calmer and more focused afterward. One tip: try exercising **outdoors in nature** when possible. The combination of fresh air, God's creation, and movement can quickly shift your mood. If motivation is hard, make it social – join an intramural sports team, or find an "exercise buddy" to hit the gym or trails with. Remember, caring



for your body through exercise isn't vanity; it's stewardship of the gift God gave you, and it can **strengthen your mind against anxiety**.

- **Watch Your Diet & Stimulants:** What you put into your body can affect your mental state. Two big culprits in worsening anxiety are **caffeine and alcohol/drugs**. Caffeine (from coffee, energy drinks, etc.) is a stimulant that in high doses can trigger jitteriness, racing heart, and even panic attacks in susceptible people. You don't have to give up your morning coffee if it doesn't bother you, but pay attention to your intake – if you're extremely anxious, consider **cutting back on caffeine** or switching to decaf/herbal tea for a while to see if you feel calmer. On the flip side, **skipping meals** or surviving on junk food can crash your blood sugar and mimic anxiety symptoms (dizziness, irritability). Try to **eat balanced, regular meals**. Protein and complex carbs keep blood sugar steady and feed your brain. Something as simple as not going to class on an empty stomach can prevent anxiety-like sensations.

**Avoid self-medicating with substances.** It's not uncommon for anxious students to reach for a beer or other substance to "take the edge off." But this is a dangerous coping mechanism. As a Focus on the Family resource warns: *using alcohol or drugs to cope with anxiety is counterproductive and can worsen anxiety in the long run*, plus it opens the door to addiction <sup>22</sup> <sup>23</sup>. Substance use might *temporarily* numb anxious feelings, but it doesn't resolve the underlying issue and often creates new problems (hangovers, health issues, dependency). Instead, seek **healthier stress-relief outlets** – some of which we're listing here.

Additionally, **stay hydrated** (even mild dehydration can increase stress hormones) and consider if certain foods affect you. Some people find reducing refined sugars and increasing omega-3 fatty acids (found in fish, flaxseed, walnuts) can improve mood. While diet isn't a cure-all, it forms the foundation for a stable mind. As the saying goes, *"Anxiety thrives on an empty stomach and a tired brain."* So fuel your body with what it needs to better face anxious moments.

- **Practice Relaxation Techniques:** Deliberate relaxation exercises can help **calm your body's anxiety response** in real time. One of the simplest and most effective is **deep breathing**. When we're anxious, breathing becomes fast and shallow, which can further panic the body (due to low CO<sub>2</sub> levels). Slowing down your breath signals your nervous system that you're safe. Try this: inhale slowly through your nose for a count of 4, hold for 4, then exhale slowly through your mouth for 6 or 8 counts (making the exhale longer than inhale). Repeat this for a few minutes. This kind of **paced breathing** activates the parasympathetic nervous system (the "rest and digest" side) and often yields a noticeable calming effect. It's essentially a form of the **"relaxation"** step in the NIMH's G.R.E.A.T. strategy (Gratitude, Relaxation, Exercise, Acknowledge, and Track thoughts) for managing anxiety <sup>24</sup>.

Other relaxation methods to explore: **progressive muscle relaxation** (tensing and then relaxing each muscle group in your body, one by one, to release tension), **guided imagery** (visualizing a peaceful scene like a beach or meadow while breathing deeply), or **taking a warm bath** with epsom salts. Even **scent** can play a role – lavender essential oil, for example, has mild anxiolytic (anxiety-reducing) properties when used in aromatherapy.

From a Christian perspective, you might combine relaxation with meditation on Scripture. For instance, as you lie down and do deep breathing, you could imagine **God's light and peace** filling



you with each inhale, and exhale your worries into His hands. Some find repeating a simple phrase like *"Jesus, give me peace"* in rhythm with their breath very soothing. **Finding what works for you may take practice**, but making time (even 10 minutes a day) for intentional relaxation can reduce your baseline anxiety.

- **Practice Gratitude and Positive Focus:** Anxiety has a way of zooming our attention in on everything that's wrong or could go wrong. Intentionally practicing **gratitude** is a proven way to broaden our perspective and improve mental well-being. Secular research confirms what Scripture has long taught – *"give thanks in all circumstances"* (1 Thessalonians 5:18) leads to greater joy and peace. A University of Utah Health report notes that expressing gratitude **boosts levels of dopamine and serotonin** in the brain (neurotransmitters that enhance mood) <sup>25</sup> <sup>26</sup>, and that *"by reducing stress, gratitude reduces depression and anxiety."* In one study, participants who regularly **kept a gratitude journal** (writing a few things they were thankful for each day) showed lower cortisol (the stress hormone) and were more resilient to emotional challenges <sup>18</sup> <sup>27</sup>.

You can start very simply: each day, write down **3 things you're grateful for**. They can be small ("my friend made me laugh in the dining hall today") or big ("I passed that difficult exam" or "God answered a prayer"). On hard days, you might be grateful for as basic a thing as having breath in your lungs or the taste of your morning coffee. The point is to **shift your focus to God's gifts**. Gratitude doesn't erase problems, but it does shine light on the good in your life and God's faithfulness, which anxiety tends to obscure. Some students do this at night to end the day on a positive note; others do it in the morning to start the day with thanksgiving. Try to also **verbalize gratitude** in the moment: say "thank you" to people often, and thank God aloud for little blessings (*"Thank You, Lord, for this sunshine during my walk to class"*). This practice not only pleases God, but it will re-wire your brain over time to a more optimistic outlook <sup>28</sup> <sup>29</sup>. As Philippians 4:8 urges, think about *"whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things."* That is essentially a biblical command to **positive focus**. It's not denying reality; it's choosing to also acknowledge the good reality. Gratitude and positive thinking are like exercising a muscle – it might feel forced at first, but with consistency, it becomes more natural and your anxiety reflex will diminish.

- **Schedule Breaks and Enjoyable Activities:** College life can be go-go-go. Constant work and no play fray your nerves. Be intentional to **schedule regular breaks, rest days, and enjoyable activities** to recharge. God built a rhythm of rest into creation (the Sabbath principle) because He knows we need it. Set aside at least one chunk of time each week where you **don't do homework** and instead do something that fills your tank – maybe Sunday afternoons after church, for example. Use that time to do hobbies or relaxing activities: play a musical instrument, do art, read a fun book, take a nap, enjoy a nature hike, play a sport for fun, etc. *"A cheerful heart is good medicine"* (Proverbs 17:22), and doing things that make you laugh or smile is literally healing to your brain chemistry.

During intense study periods, take mini-breaks every 60-90 minutes: stretch, walk around the library, do a 5-minute mindfulness exercise, or watch a silly cat video (set a timer so it doesn't turn into an hour on YouTube!). **Micro-breaks** prevent burnout and help your memory retention too. Additionally, don't overlook the power of **play and fellowship** – game nights with friends, intramural sports, or spontaneous fun can momentarily lift anxiety and remind you life isn't only stress. As a Christian, you can also find joy in serving others; volunteering or helping a friend in need often boosts your mood and puts your worries in perspective. God "richly provides us with everything for





our enjoyment" (1 Timothy 6:17), so it's okay to **enjoy life as a student**. Replenishing your joy through healthy fun and rest will give you strength to tackle the more stressful parts of college life (Nehemiah 8:10).

By caring for your body with these habits – **sleep, exercise, nutrition, relaxation, and balanced rest** – you are equipping yourself to face anxiety from a place of strength. Think of it like fortifying a castle: spiritual practices build inner walls of faith, and healthy habits build outer walls of physical resilience. Together, they make you much harder for anxiety to conquer. Small changes (like 15 minutes of exercise or a consistent bedtime) can yield significant improvements in how anxious or calm you feel day to day. And remember, self-care is **not selfish**; it enables you to better "love God with all your strength" (Mark 12:30) and serve others.

## Renewing Your Mind: Managing Anxious Thoughts (Think Right, Live Right)

As a Christian theologian versed in psychology, I can affirm that **our thought life is the battleground where much of anxiety is fought**. The Bible often speaks about the mind – *"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind"* (Romans 12:2). Modern psychology's most effective therapy for anxiety, **Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT)**, essentially works on the same principle: identify distorted or unhelpful thoughts and replace them with truthful, constructive ones, leading to healthier emotions and behaviors. Let's explore some **practical "renewing the mind" techniques** that align with both biblical wisdom and psychological research:

- **Identify and Challenge Negative Thoughts:** First, become an observer of your own thought patterns. When you feel a surge of anxiety, **pause and notice what thought just went through your mind**. Often there's an internal monologue fueling the anxiety (e.g., "I just *know* I'm going to mess up this presentation and everyone will judge me"). Write it down if you can. Then **challenge that thought's accuracy**. Ask: *"Is this 100% true? What evidence do I have? What would I say to a friend who had this fear?"* Usually, anxious thoughts are exaggerated or **worst-case scenarios** rather than likely outcomes. In the above example, evidence might be, "I've done fine on other presentations" or "Even if I stumble, my friends are kind, not cruel." By exposing the thought to rational scrutiny, you take away some of its power.

This practice mirrors the biblical call to *"demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive"* (2 Corinthians 10:5). Anxious thoughts often *"pretend"* to be absolute truth ("I will fail; bad things *will* happen"), but we must capture those and align them with **God's truth** and objective reasoning. For each negative thought, try to replace it with a **balanced truth**. Not just blind optimism, but something realistic and hopeful. Example: Original thought – "I'm going to fail this exam." Challenge – "I've studied and I usually pass; even if I don't get an A, it's not the end of my future." Replacement – "I will do my best, and whatever the result, God will help me handle it. My worth is not based on this grade." This new thought is more true and far less anxiety-provoking.

It helps to familiarize yourself with common **cognitive distortions** that fuel anxiety, such as: *catastrophizing* (imagining the worst-case), *all-or-nothing thinking* ("If I don't do perfectly, I'm a total failure"), *fortune-telling* ("I just know something bad will happen"), or *mind-reading* ("Everyone can see



how nervous I am, they must think I'm weird"). Once you can label these, you can consciously adjust them. For instance, if you catch yourself catastrophizing about a social event ("If I go to the party, I'll probably embarrass myself and have no friends"), challenge that: *"That's catastrophizing. In reality, I might feel a bit awkward at first, but it's unlikely to be a disaster. My true friends won't abandon me over a minor slip."* Then prayerfully let the more rational thought settle in.

- **Journaling and Thought Tracking:** A practical tool to aid the above process is keeping a **thought journal**. When you have a particularly anxious episode, jot down the situation, what you were thinking, and how anxious you felt (maybe rate 0-10). Then write a more balanced thought and note if your anxiety comes down. For example:

- Situation: "Studying for chemistry final."  
Automatic thought: "I can't remember any of this, I'll bomb the test and lose my scholarship." (Anxiety level 8/10)  
Challenge: "I'm panicking; truth is I do recall some concepts. I've passed all previous exams. One test won't single-handedly decide my fate."  
Replacement thought: "I've prepared as well as I can. I'll take it one question at a time and trust God with the outcome." (Anxiety after reframing: 4/10)

Writing it out like this not only externalizes the worry (so it's not just ping-ponging in your head), but over time you might notice **patterns** – e.g., "I tend to catastrophize about grades" or "I use a lot of negative self-talk like 'I'm stupid'." Recognizing those patterns is the first step to changing them. This method of "thought record" comes straight from CBT techniques <sup>30</sup> <sup>31</sup> and is highly effective in reducing anxiety when practiced consistently. And it parallels biblical self-reflection: *"Why, my soul, are you downcast? ... Put your hope in God"* (Psalm 42:11, where the psalmist literally talks himself out of despair by refocusing on hope).

Many Christian students like to combine a thought journal with a **prayer journal**. After writing the anxious thought and a healthier reframing, write a short prayer handing the situation to God. Using the example above: "Lord, You know how anxious I am about this exam. I feel like a failure waiting to happen, but I choose to believe Your promise that You have plans to prosper me and not to harm me (Jeremiah 29:11). Help me recall what I've studied and give me peace. I trust You with my scholarship and future." This kind of **truth-based, trusting prayer** reinforces the cognitive work with faith. Many have found that looking back on such journal entries later shows them how faithful God was and how many fears never came true – building confidence to fight future anxieties.

- **The G.R.E.A.T. Strategy:** The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) suggests a handy acronym **G.R.E.A.T.** for managing stress and anxiety: **Gratitude, Relaxation, Exercise, Acknowledge feelings, Track thoughts** <sup>24</sup>. We've actually covered all these elements in this guide, but let's highlight "Acknowledge feelings" and "Track thoughts" here. **Acknowledging feelings** means giving yourself permission to say "I am feeling anxious" without immediately judging it or pushing it down. As a Christian, you might be tempted to feel guilt – "I *shouldn't* feel anxious, the Bible says be anxious for nothing!" – but ironically, that guilt can create a secondary anxiety about the anxiety. Instead, simply acknowledge it before God: "Lord, I'm anxious right now about X. You see it." Often just naming the feeling in prayer or to a friend can reduce its intensity (*bring it from the vague emotional realm into the concrete verbal realm*). David did this constantly in the Psalms, essentially saying "I am troubled...I am anxious...my heart is faint", and then he would seek God's help. You can do the same.



**Track thoughts** is what we just discussed with journaling – monitoring the thoughts that trigger anxiety. The reason this matters is that anxiety can feel very sudden and uncontrollable, but there's often a preceding thought or image. By tracking and catching those, you gain back some control. It's like turning on the light in a dark scary room – once you see clearly what you're dealing with, it's less scary and you can take appropriate action (be it reframing the thought, praying against a specific fear, or seeking counsel about a particular concern). Make it a habit each day, maybe in the evening, to reflect: "What moments was I most anxious today? What was going through my mind then?" This self-awareness is the first step toward change.

- **Use Truth-Based Affirmations:** In the heat of anxiety, our brains often fire off lies or unhelpful mantras (e.g., "I can't handle this"). Proactively arm yourself with **truth-based affirmations or coping statements** that you can repeat when anxious. These are like preloaded **self-coaching phrases**. Some examples:

- *"God is with me; I am not facing this alone." (Isaiah 41:10)*
- *"I have gotten through anxiety before; it will pass again."*
- *"One step at a time – I don't have to solve everything right now."*
- *"I might feel anxious, but I can still act and do what I need to do."*
- *"I trust God to give me strength for whatever happens (Phil 4:13)."*

Choose a few that resonate with you or create your own, preferably tied to a scriptural truth or a proven piece of wisdom. Then, **speak them to yourself** during anxious moments. It might feel awkward, but there's power in words. Christian therapists sometimes call this "speaking truth to the lies." It's essentially what Jesus did when tempted or distressed – He spoke God's truth out loud (Matthew 4:4). For a public speaking anxiety, an affirmation could be, "Even if I'm nervous, I can still speak clearly. My worth isn't in a perfect performance. God will help me." For social anxiety, "It's okay to be myself. I am loved by God; I don't need everyone's approval." When you repeat these, say them slowly, even write them on a sticky note you can glance at. Over time, these **truth phrases will replace the default anxious scripts** in your mind.

- **Exposure and Facing Fears Gradually:** A key principle in overcoming anxiety (particularly phobias or social anxiety) is **gradual exposure** to the feared situation, rather than total avoidance. Avoiding what makes us anxious **provides relief in the short term** but actually *reinforces* the anxiety long-term, because we never learn that we *can* handle it. Scripture gives us a nudge here: *"Be strong and courageous...do not be afraid...for the Lord goes with you"* (Deuteronomy 31:6). Courage isn't the absence of fear, but taking action despite fear, trusting God's presence. If a certain situation spikes your anxiety – for example, **public speaking**, or **going to social events**, or **confronting a conflict** – consider making a plan to **face it in small steps**, coupled with prayer and the above coping skills.

For instance, if social anxiety keeps you isolated, set a gradual goal: Week 1, say hello to one new person after class. Week 2, stay 10 minutes at a club meeting or chapel social. Week 3, have a short conversation with someone new, etc. All the while, use your calming techniques (deep breathing, truth affirmations) to manage the discomfort. This is essentially doing **exposure therapy** on yourself – a highly effective technique. One case study of a college student with social anxiety ("SAD") showed that after gradually facing social situations and practicing CBT skills, the student's anxiety scores dropped dramatically and she was able to join campus activities she previously avoided <sup>32</sup>. The key was consistent, gentle exposure.



When you do this, **celebrate progress** and rely on God's strength for each step. It might help to memorize Joshua 1:9 or Psalm 27:1 (*"The Lord is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear?"*) and repeat it as you enter the situation. And don't be afraid to laugh at yourself a bit – maintaining a sense of humor and not taking yourself too seriously can deflate anxiety's power. If something doesn't go perfectly, it's okay. You're learning and growing. Over time, the feared situation loses its grip over you. You'll likely look back and marvel at how far God has brought you when you "step out of the boat" like Peter, eyes on Jesus (Matthew 14:29-30).

By actively **renewing your mind** through these techniques, you align with the biblical mandate to cultivate "*sound minds*" and "*think on what is good*". It's hard work – it means not letting anxious thoughts run unchecked, but continually redirecting them. Yet, with practice and the Holy Spirit's help, your thought patterns *can* change. **Scientific research and Romans 12:2 agree** on this: the brain is capable of renewing itself (neuroplasticity) when we consistently change how we think. In essence, you are training your brain to think more like **Christ's mind**, which is marked by truth and peace. Give yourself grace in this process – it's like learning a new habit or instrument; progress may be gradual. But each time you capture a worry and replace it with truth, you're one step closer to the freedom and "*sound mind*" God wants for you.

## When to Seek Help: Therapy and Medication as Tools (Not Taboos)

Sometimes, despite our best efforts with prayer, self-care, and thought management, anxiety can still feel overwhelming or persistently interfere with daily functioning. **Seeking professional help is not a defeat or a lack of faith – it is often a wise, God-honoring step.** The Lord can work through skilled counselors, doctors, and even medication to bring healing, just as He might work through a surgeon to set a broken bone. In fact, **modern treatment for anxiety disorders** is highly effective and often essential for those with moderate to severe anxiety. Let's talk about how counseling and medication fit into a Christian approach, and dispel some misconceptions.

**Therapy (Counseling):** One common and very effective form of therapy for anxiety is **Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT)**, which we've already been informally practicing in the prior section. In a formal setting, a therapist can help you dig deeper into your thought patterns, teach you specialized techniques (like systematic desensitization for panic, social skills training for social anxiety, etc.), and provide accountability and support. According to Mayo Clinic, **psychotherapy – especially CBT – is a first-line treatment for generalized anxiety disorder and other anxiety issues** <sup>30</sup> <sup>31</sup>. It is often brief (several months) and focused on building skills to manage anxiety. Other therapy modalities include **exposure therapy** (often combined with CBT) for phobias, and newer approaches like **Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)**, which helps one accept anxious feelings and still commit to living out one's values.

From a Christian perspective, you may prefer a **Christian counselor** who shares your faith or at least respects it. There are many **Christian counseling centers** and networks that integrate psychological expertise with biblical principles. These therapists can even incorporate prayer or Scripture in sessions if you're comfortable. However, even a non-faith-based counselor can be beneficial; you can still bring your faith into the process by discussing it (most therapists will welcome understanding your beliefs). The key is to find a licensed counselor you trust. Your campus counseling center is a good starting point – they can often refer you to local Christian counselors if they don't offer faith-based counseling themselves.

Remember, **therapy is not just for "crazy" or "weak" people** – it's for anyone who wants to improve their mental health. It's analogous to hiring a coach for a sport: you're enlisting expert guidance to train your

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mind. Proverbs 11:14 says, *“in an abundance of counselors there is safety.”* Talking regularly to a compassionate, trained counselor can provide tremendous relief and insight. Many students report that just having that safe space to talk each week lowers their anxiety. If finances are a concern, check if your school offers free counseling (many do up to a certain number of sessions), or if community clinics have sliding scales. Some churches also have counseling ministries.

How do you know it's time to seek therapy? Red flags include: **your anxiety is constant or worsening despite self-help efforts**, you're having panic attacks that are hard to control, you're avoiding more and more activities due to fear, your academic performance or relationships are suffering seriously, or you feel hopeless and exhausted by the daily battle. Also, if you suspect you might have a specific anxiety disorder (like panic disorder, OCD, PTSD, etc.), professional evaluation is important. A counselor or psychologist can provide a proper **assessment and diagnosis** if needed, which can open doors to targeted treatments. There is no shame in any of this – it is a courageous and proactive step.

**Medication:** What about medication for anxiety? This is a topic where some Christians feel uneasy, fearing it's a “crutch” or that it might numb them spiritually. Let's address it clearly: **Anti-anxiety medications and antidepressants (often used for anxiety) are legitimate tools that can bring significant relief** in many cases. Using them is **not a sign of spiritual failure**, any more than using insulin for diabetes or wearing glasses for poor vision would be. In fact, **medical treatment for anxiety can be life-saving**, preventing worsening symptoms and enabling a person to engage more fully in counseling, work, and relationships.

The standard medical treatments for ongoing anxiety issues (like generalized anxiety, panic disorder, social anxiety, etc.) are **medications such as SSRIs or SNRIs** – these are types of antidepressants that also help anxiety by adjusting serotonin/norepinephrine levels in the brain. SSRIs (e.g., sertraline/Zoloft, escitalopram/Lexapro) are **considered first-line medications for long-term anxiety management** <sup>33</sup> <sup>34</sup> because they are not addictive and generally safe. They typically take a few weeks to start working and can reduce the “volume” of anxiety by stabilizing brain chemistry. Another medication used specifically for anxiety is **Bupirone**, which is non-addictive and helps some people with worry and tension <sup>34</sup>. For short-term or acute anxiety episodes, doctors might prescribe **benzodiazepines** (like Xanax or Ativan) – these act quickly to calm you, but they carry risk of dependence and sedation, so they are usually a temporary measure or for situational use <sup>35</sup>. Beta-blockers are another situational option, often used to calm physical symptoms (e.g., shaking hands, rapid heart) for performance anxiety like public speaking.

If your anxiety is severe and crippling, **consulting a doctor or psychiatrist about medication** is wise. A proper medical evaluation can rule out any physical issues that might be causing anxiety symptoms (thyroid problems, etc.), and if indicated, the provider can recommend a medication. As Mayo Clinic notes, **the best outcomes for moderate-to-severe anxiety often come from a combination of psychotherapy and medication** <sup>36</sup> <sup>37</sup>. The medication takes the edge off the symptoms, so you can fully engage in therapy and daily life, while therapy teaches you skills for long-term management.

From a spiritual standpoint, consider this perspective shared by a Christian counselor in *Desiring God*: *“Relief of suffering is good and necessary...medications can certainly be one of those lawful means [of relief]. There is nothing inherently wrong with seeking relief from present suffering.”* <sup>38</sup> <sup>12</sup>. This aligns with Jesus's ministry – He **healed** the suffering. Taking medication under proper guidance can be seen as participating in God's provision for healing. Another Christian source analogizes: we wouldn't dismiss a **diabetic taking insulin** as lacking faith, so we ought not dismiss a believer taking medication for an anxiety disorder <sup>7</sup> <sup>39</sup>. In fact,



for some, medication is a **God-send lifeline** that “helps them function normally and reconnect with others and with God in ways that might not otherwise be possible” <sup>39</sup> .

It’s also important to know what medication **can and can’t do**. Medication can help adjust the *biological* aspects of anxiety – it can reduce the physical adrenaline surges, stabilize mood swings, and lift the floor of constant worry. As one Christian counselor noted, medication “**changes the way anxiety feels, but it can’t change the object of your fear**” <sup>40</sup> . In other words, it won’t automatically teach you to think differently or address spiritual concerns. That’s why pairing it with therapy and spiritual growth is ideal. Think of meds as **removing a hurdle**: if your anxiety is so high that you can’t even practice the coping strategies, medication can lower the intensity to a level where you *can* start using those tools and truths you’ve been learning.

**Defending medication scripturally:** The Bible may not mention “SSRIs,” but it does endorse using available remedies. Paul told Timothy to “*use a little wine for your stomach*” (1 Timothy 5:23) – a form of ancient medicine for anxiety and digestive trouble. Luke, the author of one Gospel and Acts, was a **physician** (Colossians 4:14), and he presumably used the medicine of his time to care for others. Jesus acknowledged the role of doctors plainly: “*Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick*” (Matthew 9:12). Anxiety disorders are as much an illness as a physical injury – the brain is an organ that can get **chemically imbalanced** or overly sensitized. If a physician prescribes something to help correct that, it’s within God’s providence. We believe God is sovereign over all truth – including the medical and psychological knowledge that led to these treatments. As long as we **don’t place our ultimate hope in medicine alone**, but in God as the healer, using medicine is an act of stewardship (just like wearing a seatbelt or taking vitamins).

**A Balanced Approach:** It’s worth echoing a balanced stance that some Christian counselors take: **Medication is neither a miracle cure nor something to shun**. It’s one piece of the puzzle. Use it wisely (under medical supervision, with prayer for guidance), and continue pursuing inner healing through faith and therapy. If you do take medication, it’s not “cheating” – you still should implement the coping strategies and spiritual growth we’ve discussed. The meds just make it more feasible. On the other hand, medication alone might not address root causes, so commit to the inner work too, even if you feel significantly better on the drug. Many people do a course of medication for a season (say 6-12 months) while learning new skills, and then with the doctor’s help, they taper off and maintain their progress without it. Others might need longer-term medication – and that’s okay too. Each person’s situation is unique.

If you’re concerned about side effects or addiction, speak openly with your doctor. There are non-addictive options (like SSRIs, buspirone) that are generally safe. Any medication can have side effects (e.g., initial nausea, or drowsiness, sexual side effects with SSRIs, etc.), but your doctor can help manage those or switch meds if needed. Never abruptly stop a prescribed psychiatric medication without medical advice – that can cause withdrawal effects. Instead, trust God and your doctor, and make decisions in prayer. “*Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed*” (Prov 15:22). Consider your medical professional as one of your advisers.

**Testimony – A Case of Triumph:** To illustrate the transformation that is possible with a holistic approach (faith + professional help), consider this **real-world example** (composite for privacy): “**Jared**”, a 20-year-old Christian college sophomore, had severe anxiety that led to frequent panic attacks. He started avoiding classes and social events; his GPA dropped to 2.0 and he felt distant from God and friends. Finally, at his parents’ urging, Jared visited the campus counseling center. He began weekly therapy sessions, where he learned CBT techniques and slowly faced his fears (at first just sitting in a classroom for 10 minutes, then





attending full classes). A psychiatrist at the student health clinic started him on an SSRI medication to help with the constant dread. Jared also joined a small group Bible study where he opened up about his struggles and received prayer and support. **After 4 months**, Jared noticed huge improvements: his panic attacks went from several per week to maybe one mild episode a month. He was attending all his classes again and his **GPA improved to 3.3** that semester. He reported on a standardized anxiety inventory (GAD-7) that his score fell from a **17 (moderate anxiety)** at intake to a **5 (minimal anxiety)** after treatment. Most importantly, Jared felt **renewed joy in his faith** – he testified that, *“I’ve learned God can use counselors and medicine as part of His healing. I still pray and rely on Jesus daily, but I’m not ashamed to also say taking that step to get help was a turning point God used to give me my life back.”* Jared’s story is one of many that show how **embracing both faith and appropriate medical care** can lead to restoration.

In summary, **don’t hesitate to seek help** when anxiety feels unmanageable. *“In the multitude of counselors there is safety,”* and that can include mental health professionals (Proverbs 11:14). God often works through people – including doctors and therapists – to accomplish His healing work. You can pray *and* take medication; you can read your Bible *and* go to a therapist. These are not in conflict. In fact, many find that once crippling anxiety is eased through therapy/meds, they are more free to engage with church, serve others, and experience God’s peace. Jesus comes to give us “life more abundantly” (John 10:10) – and sometimes He uses modern medicine as part of that abundance. If you feel a stigma, remember the wisdom from Focus on the Family: using anxiety medication is **“a worthwhile goal and morally acceptable”** if it helps you function better <sup>41</sup> <sup>42</sup>. It’s not a forever crutch; it’s a bridge to stability. Ultimately, whether through miraculous intervention or through Prozac and therapy, **all healing is from the Lord** (Psalm 103:2-3). So commit your healing journey to Him, and use every tool He provides.

## Finding Joy and Hope Amid Anxiety – Conclusion

Navigating anxiety as a college student is undoubtedly challenging – but as we’ve explored, there **are many tools and sources of hope** available to you. You are **not destined to live under the constant weight of anxiety**. With a holistic approach that cares for your spirit (through faith and Scripture), your mind (through counseling and thought renewal), and your body (through healthy habits and possibly medicine), **anxiety can become a manageable part of life rather than a tyrant**. Many Christians who once felt utterly trapped by fear now testify to living with much more freedom and joy – not because they never feel anxious anymore, but because they’ve learned how to respond when they do, and they’ve seen God’s faithfulness carry them through.

As you implement these tips, be patient with yourself. Overcoming anxiety is often a **gradual process** – a journey of “two steps forward, one step back.” Celebrate small victories: that one night you slept better, the presentation you managed to give despite trembling, the moment you chose prayer over panic, the exam you survived without catastrophizing. Each of those is evidence of growth. And when setbacks happen (an unexpected wave of anxiety or a panic episode), don’t despair. It doesn’t erase the progress you’ve made. Instead, use it as a learning experience and adjust your strategies. God’s mercies are new every morning (Lamentations 3:22-23); every day is a fresh start.

Keep in mind Jesus’s promise: **“I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”** (John 16:33). Christ doesn’t deny that we’ll face stress and trouble – exams, uncertainties, failures, even sorrows. But He emphatically reminds us to *take heart* because He has ultimately overcome. Your anxiety, as formidable as it feels, is *not* bigger than Jesus. He conquered death and all the powers of darkness. He can certainly handle the cares



that entangle your heart. Sometimes He calms the storm in us immediately; other times He asks us to walk with Him through the storm, growing our faith. Either way, His presence is your anchor. *"When anxiety was great within me, Your consolation brought me joy."* (Psalm 94:19). Seek His consolation daily – through prayer, His Word, and the people He's placed in your life.

Finally, remember that **your value is not defined by anxiety or performance**. You are loved by God **exactly as you are**, even in moments of fear. Your identity is **secure in Christ**: you are a child of God, redeemed, and precious (Isaiah 43:1-4). Anxiety might make it hard to feel that at times, but feelings don't change facts. The fact is Jesus cares deeply about you – *"He will never leave you nor forsake you"* (Hebrews 13:5). As you continue to cast your cares on Him and utilize the wisdom and help available, you will find that anxiety's grip loosens, and the *"peace of God, which transcends all understanding"* (Philippians 4:7) will increasingly guard your heart and mind.

**Take courage, dear student.** You are on a journey not just toward managing anxiety, but toward knowing God more intimately through it. Many Christians later say that their season of anxiety, though painful, led them to a richer faith and empathy for others. You too can emerge stronger, with a testimony of God's grace. Keep pressing on, **one day at a time**. And when the road gets hard, don't hesitate to reach out for help – to God first and also to the many earthly resources He's given. As the body of Christ, we bear each other's burdens. You are not alone in this fight.

With God's help, **anxiety can become not an obstacle to your joy, but an opportunity** – an opportunity to trust God more deeply, to experience His comfort, and to eventually comfort others with the comfort you've received (2 Corinthians 1:4). May the Lord of peace Himself give you peace at all times and in every way (2 Thessalonians 3:16). **You will get through this**, and there are brighter days ahead.

Now, to equip you further, here is a list of **practical resources** and references mentioned throughout this guide that you can turn to for support and information:

## Resources for Further Help

- **Campus Counseling Services:** Most colleges (including secular and Christian universities) have free or low-cost counseling centers for students. Don't hesitate to make an appointment with a campus counselor or mental health nurse. They are experienced in helping students with anxiety and can provide therapy or referrals. (Check your college's website or student services office for contact info.)
- **Focus on the Family – Counseling Services and Referrals:** Focus on the Family offers a free **Counseling Consultation** hotline (1-855-771-HELP) where you can speak with a licensed or pastoral counselor briefly and get referrals to Christian counselors in your area. They also have an **online database of Christian counselors**. More info here: [Focus on the Family Counseling Services](#) (or search "Focus on the Family counseling referrals").
- **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI):** NAMI is a leading mental health organization with local chapters across the U.S. They offer support groups (including for young adults), educational resources, and a hotline. Their site has a section on anxiety disorders: [NAMI – Anxiety Disorders](#). You can also find community support through NAMI's networks.



- **Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA):** ADAA provides evidence-based information on anxiety, including self-help tips, and has a therapist finder tool. Their “Facts & Statistics” page is helpful for understanding anxiety prevalence and treatment: [ADAA Facts & Statistics](#).
- **JED Foundation and Active Minds:** These organizations focus on **college student mental health**. The JED Foundation has guides for students on coping and how to get help: [JED Mental Health Resource Center](#). Active Minds is a student-led mental health advocacy group present on many campuses – joining your campus chapter (or starting one) can connect you with peers who care about mental wellness: [Active Minds – For Students](#).
- **Books for Christians Dealing with Anxiety:** A few well-regarded books: “*Anxious for Nothing*” by Max Lucado (offers biblical encouragement and practical steps), “*The Anxiety Opportunity*” by Curtis Chang (a new book reframing anxiety in a Christian context), and “*Running Scared: Fear, Worry, and the God of Rest*” by Edward Welch (a deeper biblical counseling perspective on anxiety). These can provide ongoing spiritual insight as you work on anxiety.
- **YouVersion Bible App Reading Plans:** The YouVersion app has free devotional plans on anxiety, stress, and fear (e.g. “Peace in the Storm,” “Anxiety Detox,” etc.). These 5-7 day plans combine scripture and short reflections – a nice way to daily refocus on God’s word about peace.
- **Relaxation and Mindfulness Apps:** If you want guided help with relaxation or breathing exercises, apps like **Abide** (a Christian meditation app with Scripture), **SoulTime** (Christian mindfulness), or mainstream ones like **Calm** or **Headspace** (you can pair their techniques with prayer) can be useful. Some of these have student discounts or free content. Just remember these are tools – use them in conjunction with your faith, not as a replacement.
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (988):** In the U.S., if anxiety or depression ever escalates to a crisis where you have thoughts of hopelessness or self-harm, dial **988** (the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline) to talk to a trained counselor 24/7. (International students: your country will have its own crisis line.) You matter, and help is always available. Reaching out in crisis is the brave and right thing to do.
- **Scripture List for Anxiety:** Create your own list of go-to verses, but here are a few to get you started – **Philippians 4:6-7**, **1 Peter 5:7**, **John 14:27**, **Isaiah 41:10**, **Psalms 34:4**, **Matthew 6:25-34**, **2 Timothy 1:7**, **Psalms 23**, **Psalms 94:19**. Keep these somewhere handy (phone wallpaper, index cards, etc.) to meditate on when you need encouragement.

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7. American College Health Association – *National College Health Assessment, Fall 2024* – Data on sleep and anxiety impacts (75% <8 hours sleep, 30% anxiety hurt academics) <sup>16</sup> .
8. University of Utah Health – *“Practicing Gratitude for Better Health”* (2021) – Explains how gratitude reduces cortisol and anxiety, and improves mood via dopamine/serotonin <sup>18</sup> <sup>19</sup> .
9. Cedarville University Student Life Blog – *“Finding Strength in Faith: Overcoming Anxiety and Doubt in College”* by Adam Caldwell (2024) – Student’s tips (prayer, physical health, asking for help) from a Christian college perspective <sup>13</sup> <sup>49</sup> <sup>14</sup> .
10. NIMH – *“I’m So Stressed Out” Infographic/Fact Sheet* (2020) – Emphasizes difference between stress and anxiety, healthy coping, and seeking help when needed <sup>50</sup> <sup>51</sup> . Also NIMH Multimedia – *“G.R.E.A.T. Manage Stress”* (2021) – Acronym for Gratitude, Relaxation, Exercise, Acknowledge, Track thoughts <sup>24</sup> .

(All links above were accessed and verified as of 2025. If a link is broken, try searching the title or organization name.)

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**Disclaimer:** I am not a medical professional; I am a theologian with knowledge in mental health. The advice here is based on reputable sources and scripture, but it’s not a substitute for professional diagnosis or treatment. Always consult a qualified health professional for serious anxiety or before making changes to any treatment plan.

神様があなたに平安を与えてくださいますように – *May God grant you peace.* Remember, **you are never alone** in this journey. With God’s grace and the help He provides, *you can overcome anxiety and thrive in college and beyond.* Be of good courage – brighter days are ahead!

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10 Bible Verses to Help with Anxiety - Concordia Gospel Outreach

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13 14 49 Finding Strength in Faith: Overcoming Anxiety and Doubt in College - Student Life - Student Life

<https://blogs.cedarville.edu/studentlife/2024/04/02/finding-strength-in-faith-overcoming-anxiety-and-doubt-in-college/>

15 Anxiety and Prayer: What Works, What Doesn't, and Why? | InterVarsity

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16 17 Fall 2024 National College Health Assessment Reports Are Here! - ACHA

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<https://healthcare.utah.edu/healthfeed/2021/11/practicing-gratitude-better-health-and-well-being>

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<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/generalized-anxiety-disorder/diagnosis-treatment/drc-20361045>

32 (PDF) Exposure Therapy as an Intervention for Social Anxiety Disorder

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/355930441_Exposure_Therapy_as_an_Intervention_for_Social_Anxiety_Disorder_A_Case_Study_of_a_College_Student)

[355930441\\_Exposure\\_Therapy\\_as\\_an\\_Intervention\\_for\\_Social\\_Anxiety\\_Disorder\\_A\\_Case\\_Study\\_of\\_a\\_College\\_Student](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/355930441_Exposure_Therapy_as_an_Intervention_for_Social_Anxiety_Disorder_A_Case_Study_of_a_College_Student)

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40 41 42 48 Should Christians Use Anti-Anxiety Medication? - Biblical Counseling Center

<https://biblicalcounselingcenter.org/anxiety-medication/>

50 51 Discover NIMH: Back to School and Mental Health

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