

You Can Relax: 8 Natural Remedies for Anxiety



By [Melissa Breyer](#) | [Tree Hugger](#)

Anxiety is a wily monster – an insidious mix of fear, worry, and uneasiness that culminates in nervous inner turmoil, it's no fun. It's a bummer. It eats away at happiness and makes everything feel lousy. Many of our anxiety symptoms have evolved from our fight-flight-freeze response, leading to an array of uncomfortable symptoms; high worriers often also suffer from muscle aches, tension, and headaches.

[One study links anxiety to higher I.Q. and empathic abilities.](#)

Treatments for anxiety run the gamut from Cognitive Behavioral Therapy to the pharmaceutical big guns like Xanax. But there are a number of natural remedies that can be put into action for relief for bouts of anxiety as well, consider the following:

1. Lavender

[Lavender essential oil](#) can be used for aromatherapy to positive effect. One [study](#) in 2007 found that lavender aromatherapy reduced serum cortisol – a component in the body's response to stress. Another found lavender massage can even lower systolic pressure the top blood pressure number that's associated with stress. Meanwhile, the University of Maryland Medical Center describes a [study](#) that found massage with essential oils, particularly lavender, may result in improved sleep quality, more stable mood, better concentration, and reduced anxiety.

2. Forest bathing

Shinrin-yoku – or [forest bathing](#) – could anything be more poetic? The Japanese practice of taking time out to walk in the woods has been shown to have a surprising – but actually, not-so-surprising – positive effect on health. One [study](#) on the practice concluded that forest environments promote lower concentrations of cortisol, lower pulse rate, lower blood pressure, greater parasympathetic nerve activity, and lower sympathetic nerve activity than do city environments. It's believed that the benefit comes partly from inhaling phytoncide (wood essential oils) like α -pinene and limonene, which are antimicrobial volatile organic compounds emitted from trees. Get thee to a forest! And if you don't have a forest nearby, Shinrin-yoku expert [Dr. Qing Li](#) says that a two-hour walk in a city park rich with trees can significantly boost vigor and decrease symptoms of anxiety and depression.

[*Enjoy this article on why your brain needs nature.*](#)

3. Exercise

Nobody likes to be told to exercise, but if anxiety is the alternative, perhaps it's not such a bad idea. Exercise

reduces the stress hormones adrenaline and cortisol, while stimulating the production of endorphins. It also leads to a boost in levels of the serotonergic system, which also may help to decrease anxiety and improve your mood. [Yoga has been shown to work specifically for anxiety](#); but other activities will help as well. Find something you enjoy – it's really the only guarantee you'll keep it up – and work up to 30 minutes a day minimum, five times a week.

4. Laughter

When your rife with anxiety laughter may seem like a joke, but even just pretend [guffawing](#) can help. Clinical psychologist Karen Lynn Cassiday, PhD, from the Anxiety and Depression Association of America says, "Even if you do a fake laugh, you get an instant hit of dopamine." If laughing is just too much of a stretch, look for a laugh app for your phone – seriously, there are such things. And perhaps merely the search alone will help – one [study](#) found that just the anticipation of mirthful laughter reduces the stress hormone cortisol, which increases with anxiety.

[*This article shows how laughter affects your body in the same way that exercise does.*](#)

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