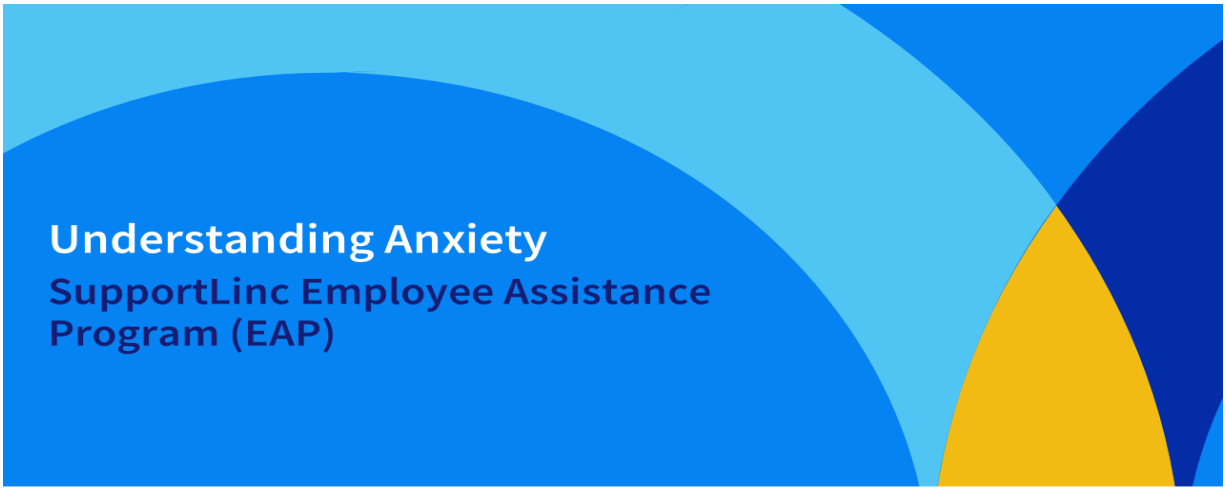
Understanding Anxiety
Participant Workbook

Introduction and disclaimer



Penn State Health

Disclaimer

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Objectives

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This training is designed to help you:

- Become aware of the prevalence of mental health concerns
- Identify signs and symptoms of anxiety disorder
- Recognize how anxiety can manifest
- Understand how to help someone with a mental health concern
- Implement coping skills for anxiety and see what resources are available

What would you like to get out of today's presentation?

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What is anxiety disorder?

What is anxiety disorder?

According to Mayo Clinic:

"Experiencing occasional anxiety is a normal part of life. However, people with anxiety disorders frequently have intense, excessive and persistent worry and fear about everyday situations. Often, anxiety disorders involve repeated episodes of sudden feelings of intense anxiety and fear or terror that reach a peak within minutes (panic attacks).

"These feelings of anxiety and panic interfere with daily activities, are difficult to control, are out of proportion to the actual danger and can last a long time. You may avoid places or situations to prevent these feelings. Symptoms may start during childhood or the teen years and continue into adulthood."

What does anxiety mean to you?

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How common is anxiety?

How common is anxiety?

Anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the U.S., affecting 40 million adults (19.1% of the population) age 18 and older every year (pre-pandemic).

- Anxiety disorders are highly treatable, yet only 36.9% of those suffering receive treatment.
- People with an anxiety disorder are 3 – 5 times more likely to go to the doctor and 6 times more likely to be hospitalized for psychiatric disorders than those who don't suffer from anxiety disorders.

Depression and anxiety disorders commonly co-exist.

Do you, or someone you know, suffer from anxiety disorder?

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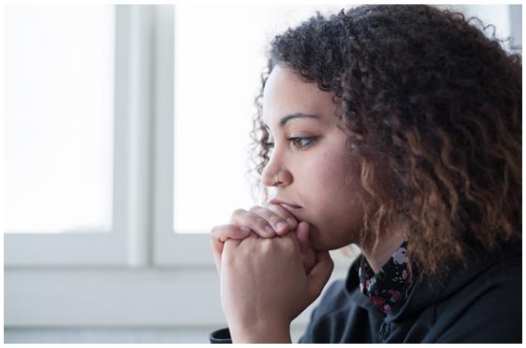
What is anxiety?

What is anxiety?

- Consistent worry or fear
- Overreaction to situations
- Overly intense feelings
- Difficulty coping
- Lack of productivity
- Physical symptoms



What are some of your warning signs, symptoms or triggers?

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Types of anxiety disorders

Types of anxiety disorders

Generalized anxiety (GAD)

GAD is being in a consistent state of anxiety without a specific reason. You may be worried about safety, concern about others or a belief that something is going to go wrong even though there is no evidence that any of it may happen.

Social anxiety

Social anxiety is characterized by high levels of fear around meeting others, engaging in conversations or interacting socially. This fear may be about being judged, criticized or not being able to engage. Isolation and panic attacks about participating in social interactions are common.

How can you be a support to those that suffer from anxiety?

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Types of anxiety disorders continued

Types of anxiety disorders continued

Panic

Panic disorder is characterized by panic attacks which are extreme episodes of anxiety accompanied by severe physical symptoms that can mimic things like heart attacks. Unlike GAD, these attacks come in short bursts.

Phobias

Phobias are strong fears and reactions to specific objects, people, events and/or situations. This may result in avoiding anything related to that fear. This can include trying to overly or unrealistically control life events and surroundings which often interferes with living a healthy, happy life.

Have you, or someone you know, experienced a panic attack or phobia? How did you, or they, work through it?

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What causes anxiety disorders?

What causes anxiety disorders?

- Family genetics
- Brain chemistry
- Traumatic life events
- Challenging environment
- Chronic stressors

How can anxiety impact your daily life?

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The gap in getting help

The gap in getting help

- 72% of people who have daily stress and anxiety say it interferes with their lives at least moderately.
- 40% experience persistent stress or excessive anxiety in their daily lives.
- 30% with daily stress have taken prescription medication to manage stress, nervousness, emotional problems or lack of sleep.
- 28% have had an anxiety or panic attack.

Only 9% have been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder.

How have untreated mental health concerns impacted you, your workplace or family members?

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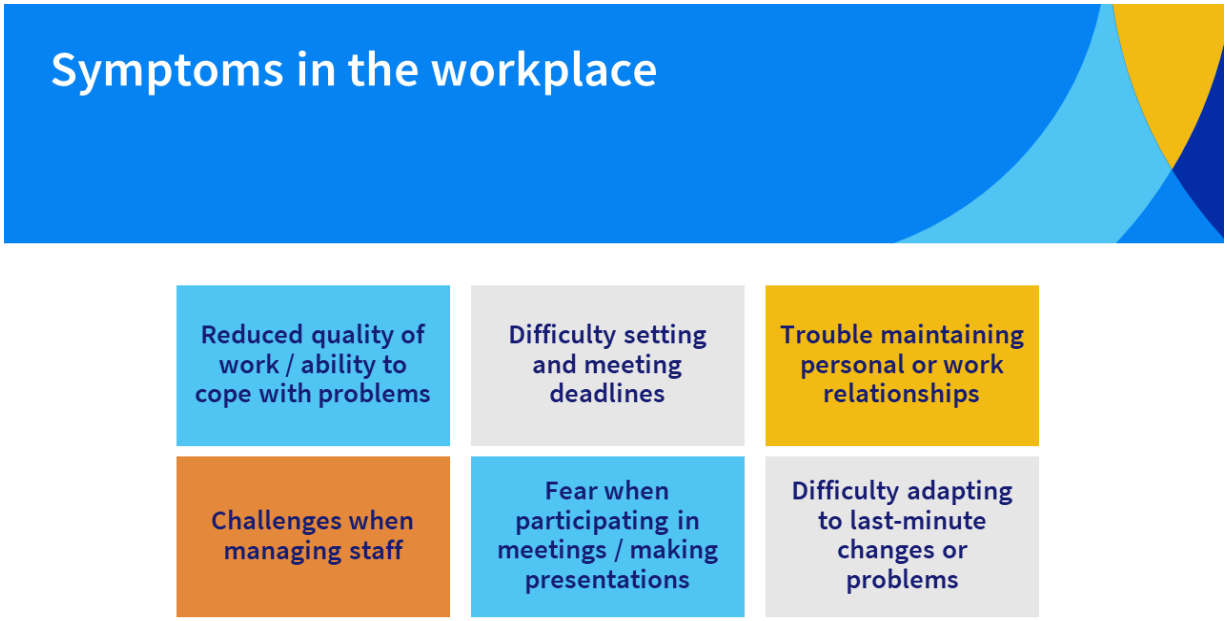
Symptoms in the workplace



In what ways may anxiety have impacted you at work?

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Treatment for anxiety

Treatment for anxiety

- Therapy: seek counseling
- Medication: find a doctor
- Support: reach out to others
- Coping exercises: practice daily
- Self-care: live a healthy lifestyle

Choose one area to focus on this week to help you cope.

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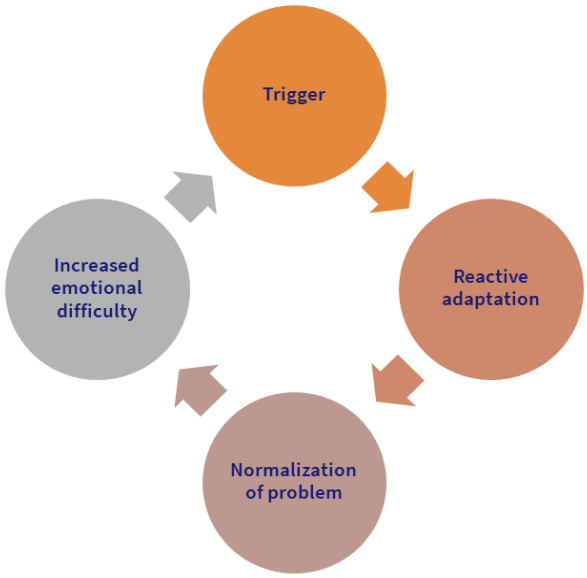
Awareness: reactive vs. response

Reactive

Awareness: reactive vs. response
Reactive



In what areas of your life would it be helpful to be less reactive?

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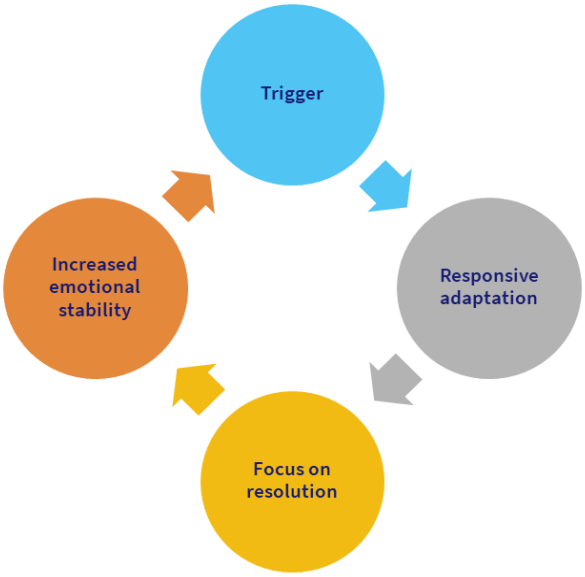
Awareness: reactive vs. response

Responsive

Awareness: reactive vs. response
Responsive



In what areas of your life could you be more responsive?

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Challenge unhelpful thoughts

Challenge unhelpful thoughts

- What's most likely to happen?
- How would someone else see the situation?
- How likely is it that what I fear will come true?
- Is my thought based on reality or is it my perception?
- If what I fear comes true, will it matter down the road?

Choose one or two intrusive thoughts to challenge today.

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5, 4, 3, 2, 1, method

- Look around and name 5 things you can see
- Pay attention and name 4 things you can hear
- Name 3 things you can feel
- Focus and name 2 things you can smell in this moment
- Name 1 thing you can taste or want to taste

What do you notice as you go through this method? How do you feel afterward?

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Breathe deeply

Breathe deeply

- Make yourself comfortable
- Breath deeply into your belly through your nose
- Breath out gently through your mouth
- Continue for three to five minutes
- Practice regularly

How do you feel after taking the time to truly breathe?

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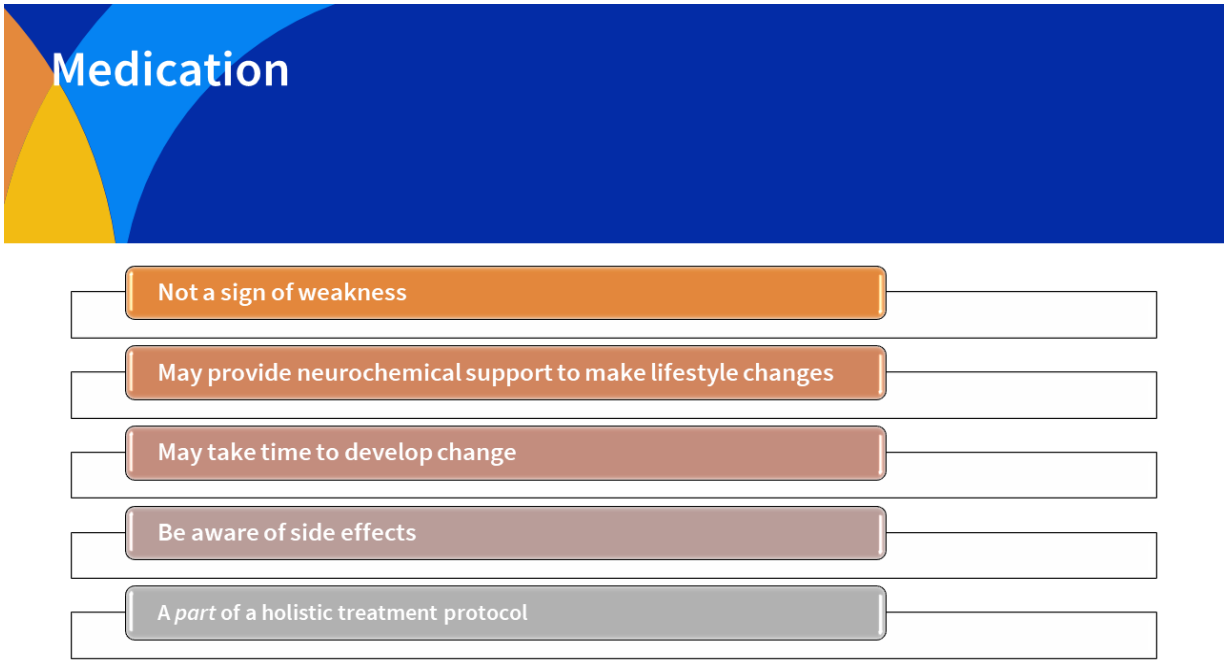
Medication



In what ways do you think medication is something that could benefit you or a family member?

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Counseling

Counseling

We don't have to *like* our counselor, but we do need to *trust* them. It's okay to acknowledge a poor match.

How do you think counseling could be a resource for you to help develop coping skills?

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Helping our children with anxiety disorders

Helping our children with anxiety disorders

Anxiety disorders affect 31.9% of adolescents between 13 and 18 years old.

- Pay attention to your child's feelings
- Stay calm when your child becomes anxious about a situation or event.
- Recognize and praise small accomplishments
- Be flexible but try to maintain a normal routine.
- Modify expectation during stressful periods
- Reduce stigma by openly talking about mental health concerns at home.
- Plan in advance for transitions (e.g., allow extra time in the morning if getting to school is difficult)

How can you best support your child/children with anxiety?

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Interactive toolkits

Interactive toolkits

Mindfulness
(www.mindfulness.tools)

Practical tools and exercises for incorporating mindfulness into everyday life.

Resiliency
(www.resiliency.tools)

Skill development resources to help you 'bounce back' from challenging situations.

Meditation
(www.meditate.tools)

Easy-to-use collection of resources that includes guided meditations, tip sheets and more.

Sleep fitness
(www.sleepfitness.tools)

Information and resources to help you learn good sleep habits and achieve healthy sleep.

Visit one of the toolkits for self-care and coping resources.

Phone 1-888-881-5462
Web www.supportlinc.com
Log in or create account
(code: psh)
Mobile

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What is SupportLinc?

What is SupportLinc?

The SupportLinc Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a health benefit, separate from your medical insurance, offered by your employer to help you manage life's daily challenges.

SupportLinc can refer you to professional counselors, services and resources that will help you and your eligible family members resolve a broad range of personal and work-related concerns.

What services are included?
Work-life benefits

Legal consultation

Free in-person or telephonic consultation with a licensed attorney

No employment law

Financial consultation

Expert guidance and consultation from financial professionals

Identity theft consultation

Free consultation with an identity theft recovery professionals

Tailored recovery action plan

Dependent care referrals

Expert referrals to child and adult/elder care providers, facilities and other resources

"Convenience" referrals

Guidance and referrals to a variety of daily living resources: home improvement, entertainment services, pet care, auto repair, wellness, travel, handymen, volunteer opportunities etc.

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Getting started

Getting started

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Call: 1-888-881-LINC (5462)

Visit: www.supportlinc.com

Log in or create account
(code: psh)

QR Code:

SupportLinc
Support for everyday issues. Every day.

Phone 1-888-881-5462

Web www.supportlinc.com
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(code: psh)

Mobile

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Additional resources

Coping with Generalized Anxiety Disorder

It's normal to feel anxious from time to time, especially if your life is stressful. However, severe, ongoing anxiety that interferes with day-to-day activities may be a sign of Generalized Anxiety Disorder.

It's possible to develop Generalized Anxiety Disorder as a child or as an adult. Living with Generalized Anxiety Disorder can be a long-term challenge. In many cases, it occurs along with other anxiety or mood disorders.

Symptoms

Generalized Anxiety Disorder symptoms can vary. They can include:

- Constant worrying or obsession about small or large concerns
- Restlessness and feeling keyed up or on edge
- Fatigue
- Difficulty concentrating or your mind "going blank"
- Irritability
- Muscle tension or muscle aches
- Trembling, feeling twitchy or being easily startled
- Trouble sleeping
- Sweating, nausea or diarrhea
- Shortness of breath or rapid heartbeat

There may be times when your worries don't completely consume you, but you still feel anxious even when there's no apparent reason. For example, you may feel intense worry about your safety or that of your loved ones, or you may have a general sense that something bad is about to happen.

In most cases, Generalized Anxiety Disorder improves with medications or psychological counseling (psychotherapy). Making lifestyle changes, learning coping skills and using relaxation techniques also can help. Some coping mechanisms that can help are below:

- Control your worry. Pick a place and time to do your worrying. Make it the same time and same place every day. Spend 30 minutes thinking about your concerns and what you can do about them. Try not to dwell on what "might" happen. Focus more on what's really happening.
- You can learn ways to help you relax. These may include muscle relaxation, yoga, biofeedback and deep breathing. Muscle relaxation is easy. Start by choosing a muscle and holding it tight for a few seconds. Then relax the muscle. Do this with all of your muscles. Try starting with your feet and working your way up your body.
- Confront the things that have made you anxious in the past. Start by just picturing yourself confronting these things. After you begin to feel more comfortable envisioning that, you can begin to actually face them.

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Additional resources

- In the process, you might find it helpful to make a list of things that cause you to feel anxious. Start with the thing that causes you the least anxiety and work your way up. If you feel yourself getting anxious, practice one of your relaxation techniques or focus on a simple task such as counting backward.
- Label the level of your fear from zero to 10 and watch it go up and down. Notice that it doesn't stay at a very high level for more than a few seconds. When the fear comes, accept it. Wait and give it time to pass without running away from it.
- Exercise regularly. People who have anxiety often quit exercising, but exercise can give you a sense of wellbeing and help decrease your stress.
- Get plenty of sleep. Don't rely on alcohol or drugs. It may seem that alcohol or drugs relax you, but in the long run, they worsen anxiety and depression.
- Avoid caffeine, a stimulant found in coffee, tea, soft drinks, and chocolate. Caffeine may increase your sense of anxiety. Also avoid over-the-counter diet pills and supplements that contain stimulants.
- If you are still feeling crippling anxiety, discuss your feelings with your physician. He or she may prescribe medicine to help reduce anxiety while you learn new ways to respond to the things that cause it.
- Talk about your anxiety with your doctor. This is important so your doctor can make sure your plan is working. You may also need to see a counselor. Counseling can help you learn to express your needs and cope with your feelings. Support groups can also be helpful, both during counseling and to bolster your sense of security afterwards.
- Remember that although feelings of anxiety are scary, they won't hurt you. The most important thing is to take action. Any action you take will help, because it will give you a sense of control over your anxiety.

If you're feeling anxious or need someone to talk to, the Meditation Toolkit provides meditation techniques, tips and other resources, including guided meditations for anxiety relief and sleep relaxation to positively aid in improving your mental health and wellbeing.

Having a better understanding of anxiety and identifying your triggers can help reduce worry and fear. For support with anxiety and other mental health concerns, reach out to a licensed clinician at your Employee Assistance Program.

For a free anxiety screening, please visit: https://demo.mysupportportal.com/anxiety-screening/

Please also visit Animo on your web portal for self-guided digital cognitive behavioral therapy (dCBT) to help you with anxiety, depression, social anxiety, phobias, perfectionism, worry, coping with panic, low self-esteem and more.

For further resources, please go to your portal and use the search bar to type in "Challenging Negative Thoughts Flash Course" and "Understanding Anxiety Flash Course."

Additional resources

Using Music to Reduce Anxiety

Whether you enjoy pop, hip-hop, rap, country or a different genre, music can be a source of calm and inspiration for anyone. Whether you're feeling down or just want to dance to your favorite song, music can help boost your mood and get you through the day. Read on to find out the different ways in which music can ease anxiety and consider these tips the next time you listen to your favorite artist.

- It can boost your mood. Studies show that listening to music increases dopamine, a chemical in the body that releases feelings of happiness and pleasure. Feeling down? Put on an upbeat tune to increase your energy.
- It can form connections. Listening to your favorite sounds or meaningful lyrics can form connections. For example, when you're feeling down or dealing with something hard, you can turn on an artist or song that relates to your current situation. You could also find others who like similar music, which can lead to friendships.
- It can improve health. Feeling anxious can lead to bigger mental health issues like high blood pressure. Studies show that listening to calming sounds or classical music can reduce stress and hypertension as well as reduce depression by 26 percent.
- It can enhance creativity. Studies show that listening to music can foster creative thinking. For example, listening to a song with meaningful lyrics can inspire you to create your own playlist with your favorite songs. You might feel more inspired to write your own songs, pick up an instrument or simply dance to the beat.
- It can increase productivity. Silence can be uncomfortable and sometimes even deafening. It can also cause anxious thoughts to intrude and make it difficult to complete tasks. However, listening to your favorite sounds or songs can motivate you to do your best and help you stay more focused.

Music is universal and no matter how you listen or what you listen to, it can provide therapeutic effects. So, what are you waiting for? Turn on your favorite song and relax!