



10 Things You Should Never Say to Someone Who is Anxious

...And What To Say Instead

1. "Just calm down."

Why it doesn't help: If anxious people could just calm down, they would! Their brain's amygdala (the part responsible for fear) is overactive, making it hard for them to relax.

What to say instead: "I'm here for you. Let's take some deep breaths together."

2. "It's not a big deal."

Why it doesn't help: The prefrontal cortex, which helps people think logically, is often overpowered by anxiety. So even if something seems small to you, it feels huge to them.

What to say instead: "I can see this is really upsetting for you. How can I help?"

3. "You're being ridiculous."

Why it doesn't help: Anxiety isn't a choice. Saying this can make someone feel ashamed and even more anxious.

What to say instead: "I know this is hard for you. I'm here to listen."

4. "You just need to stop overthinking."

Why it doesn't help: Anxiety causes the brain to go into overdrive, constantly scanning for danger. It's not as simple as turning off a switch.

What to say instead: "Your feelings are valid. Let's work through this together."

5. "You're fine."

Why it doesn't help: When someone is anxious, their nervous system is telling them they are NOT fine. Dismissing their feelings can make them feel unheard.

What to say instead: "I know this is tough. Want to talk about it?"

**DON'T SAY
SAY INSTEAD**

6. "Other people have it worse."

Why it doesn't help: Comparing pain doesn't make anyone feel better. Anxiety is real, no matter what someone else is going through.

What to say instead: "Your feelings matter. I'm here to support you."

7. "Just think positive."

Why it doesn't help: Anxious thoughts aren't a choice. The brain's chemicals, like cortisol (*the stress hormone*), are in overdrive, making it hard to switch to happy thoughts.

What to say instead: "I believe in you. Let's find one small thing that feels good right now."

8. "You should be over this by now."

Why it doesn't help: Anxiety doesn't have an expiration date. Healing takes time, and pressure only adds more stress.

What to say instead: "Healing isn't always quick, and that's okay. I'm here for you."

9. "Have you tried not being anxious?"

Why it doesn't help: Anxiety isn't a choice. It's like telling someone with allergies to "just stop sneezing."

What to say instead: "I know this isn't easy. I'm here to support you however I can."

10. "You're just doing this for attention."

Why it doesn't help: Anxiety isn't an act. The brain's nervous system is in high alert, and feeling judged only makes it worse.

What to say instead: "I care about you and want to help. Let's find a way to make this a little better."