



I Need Help Now!

This handout summarizes some key interventions to help you feel better now. Consider the questions below and take action as needed. When you're feeling on the edge and having a hard time with acute anxiety and worry, it's hard to remember what you can do in the moment to help yourself. Keep this tip sheet handy so you can refer to it as needed.

If you are experiencing any of the below, try a **Lizard Brain Treat!** Even though you may not feel hungry, fueling your brain will help you reduce your anxiety and symptoms.

1. Are you having a panic attack?
2. Are you uncomfortably anxious or irritated?
3. Are you waking at 3am in the morning, with your mind racing?
4. Are you overly or underly emotional for the situation?
5. Have you not eaten for more than 3 hours?
6. Do you want to feel better in 10-15 minutes?

Lizard Brain Treat

A Lizard Brain Treat is a snack of sugar (a quick fuel) and protein (a longer lasting fuel). You want the quick fuel to get to your brain almost immediately, which will start to reduce the adrenalin causing you to be in your reactive lizard brain. Following this with protein extends the amount of time you're in your responsive cortex brain, before needing to re-fuel. Choose one quick fuel and one protein from the lists below – or from your favorite foods.

Ideas for Quick Fuels:

- ¼ cup of juice
- 1 piece of hard candy
- ¼ cup of soda
- Honey stick
- 1 tbl of jelly

Ideas for Protein:

- ¼ cup of nuts
- ¼ cup of nuts
- A stick of jerky
- ¼ cup of cottage cheese
- 2 tbl of peanut (or other nut) butter

Combined sources work too (as long as they aren't sugar-free)!

- ½ cup of a protein shake
- Protein bar
- ½ a PB&J sandwich

Generally speaking, your anxiety will drop by 10-20% within 10-15 minutes.

What other things help you feel better?

Being At Your Best During High Stakes Events

Are you going to an event that you know will make you feel uncomfortable or anxious? Our natural tendency is to not eat in these situations, which only increases the hormone-signaling that this is a stressful event, releasing more adrenalin. To stay in the responsive cortex brain—and out of the reactive lizard brain—it's helpful to make sure that your brain and body have enough fuel to manage the high stakes event.

By eating food that contains both carbohydrates and a sufficient amount of protein (as well as healthy fat and some fiber), your brain will be fueled for 2-4 hours. Getting around 20 grams of protein in a meal will last you longer. (*Note: eating more than 20 grams of protein at one time does not extend this benefit.*)

Examples of high stakes events:

- Any situation where you want to be at your best
- Being around people that stress you out
- Doing something new
- Being around highly emotional people
- Family events
- Work-related social events
- Job interviews
- Test taking
- Going to therapy
- Public speaking
- Going to court

Some examples of high-protein snacks and meals:

Animal-based

- Cottage cheese or Greek yogurt
- Protein shakes and bars (whey, egg, bone broth powders)
- A few slices of deli meat such as chicken or turkey with carrots or pita bread
- Deli salad with chicken or turkey
- Teriyaki chicken kabobs
- Hard-boiled eggs with carrots or pita bread
- Chicken sandwich
- Tacos or burritos (with meat)

Plant-based

- Hummus with carrots, celery, or pita bread
- Baba ghanoush with corn chips
- Nut butter sandwich
- Nut butter with apple slices
- Protein shakes and bars (rice, pea, soy protein powders)
- Tofu salads, sandwiches, or wraps
- Bag of mixed, non-roasted nuts (hazelnuts, walnuts, almonds, cashews)
- Tacos or burritos (with bean or tofu)

Here are some visual clues to help you get enough protein:

- 3 oz of meat = a deck of playing cards
- 1 oz cheese = a thumb
- 1 C yogurt = a hand holding a tennis ball
- 1 oz nuts = a golf ball
- ½ C cooked grain = a small fist
- 1 Tbl nut butter or nuts = a silver dollar