Anxiety & Stress Management Guide

Anxiety and stress can affect the body, thoughts, and emotions; especially during pregnancy, postpartum, and grief. This guide explains what anxiety can look like, offers practical coping tools, and helps you know when additional support is needed.

Why Anxiety & Stress Matter

Ongoing stress and anxiety can affect sleep, concentration, physical health, and emotional well-being. During pregnancy and postpartum, stress can feel amplified due to hormonal changes, lack of rest, and major life adjustments. Learning how to manage stress early can support healing and stability.

What Anxiety Can Feel Like

Anxiety does not always look like worry alone. It may include:
- *Racing thoughts or constant fear*
- *Tight chest, shortness of breath, or rapid heartbeat*
- *Muscle tension or headaches*
- *Upset stomach or nausea*
- *Trouble sleeping even when tired*
- *Feeling on edge, irritable, or overwhelmed*

Immediate Tools to Calm the Body

When anxiety is high, start with the body:
- *Slow breathing: inhale through the nose for 4 counts, exhale through the mouth for 6 counts*
- *Grounding: name 5 things you can see, 4 you can feel, 3 you can hear, 2 you can smell, 1 you can taste*

• *Temperature: hold something cool or splash cool water on your face*
• *Movement: gentle stretching or a short walk*

Tools to Calm the Mind

• *Write worries down and set them aside*
• *Limit news or social media that increases stress*
• *Practice short moments of mindfulness or prayer*
• *Use reassuring statements such as, "I am safe right now."*

Daily Habits That Support Regulation

Small, consistent habits matter:
• *Adequate hydration and regular meals*
• *Rest when possible, even in short periods*
• *Gentle movement approved by your provider*
• *Connecting with a trusted person daily*
• *Keeping medical and therapy appointments*

When Coping Tools Are Not Enough

If anxiety is constant, worsening, or interfering with daily life, additional support may be needed. This can include therapy, medication, or structured support groups. Seeking help is a sign of strength, not failure.

How to Ask for Help

You can say:
• *"My anxiety feels unmanageable."*
• *"I'm having panic symptoms and need support."*
• *"These tools are not enough, and I need more help."*
Ask that your concerns be documented and request referrals if needed.

Alabama-Specific Note

In Alabama, mental health support may be available through OB providers, primary care clinics, community mental health centers, Medicaid/Plan First services, and crisis lines. If you are unsure where to start, ask your provider or local health department for guidance.

You Are Not Failing

Anxiety is not a weakness. With the right tools and support, it can be managed. You deserve peace, care, and understanding.