ADVERTISEMENT

NURSE PRACTITIONER'S CORNER

with Nurse Practitioner Esther Aguirre

■ ESTHER AGUIRRE
PSYCHIATRIC NURSE PRACTITIONER,
ACACIA NETWORK MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

I feel so worried all the time. What can I do to get back to normal?

Dear Doctor,
I am an 18 year old student at Bronx Community College, and lately I have had trouble getting to sleep at night. Even though I haven't ever gotten lower than a B, I lay in bed worried that I'm going to fail my classes, that I'll never get a good job, never move out of my mom's house... the list goes on and on. Sometimes, when I get like this, my heart starts beating fast and I want to scream. I feel so worn down by all the worry. It's like I'm running on a hamster wheel and can't stop. What can I do to get back to normal?
- Nora

Dear Nora,

I'm sorry to hear that you're dealing with so much stress and anxiety in your life right now. At 18, and especially if you're doing well in school, you shouldn't have to worry so much.

Some anxiety and sadness are normal reactions to life events. But when they persist or are very intense feelings, they pass beyond normal.

Some questions you could ask yourself are: how are your relationships with your loved ones right now? Has something changed in the recent months, or since you started feeling this way? Do you have some physical symptoms such as stomach ache, headaches? It may be a good idea for you to seek counseling. Counseling can go a long way in helping people identify what is causing them to feel out of the ordinary and helping to resolve the issue at hand.

The other possibility is that you may be suffering from generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), which could cause you to feel anxious no matter how well things are going in your life. Symptoms of GAD can include: constant worrying, loss of appetite, sleeplessness, fatigue, irritability, restlessness, trouble concentrating, shortness of breath, rapid heartbeat and, even, nausea. More than twice as many women than men suffer from GAD and it often goes hand in hand with depression. Substance abuse, childhood trauma and a family history of anxiety can also play a role.

Stress may aggravate an existing situation. Luckily, GAD also is treatable. Counseling and, possibly, medications can help you get to a point where everyday stress is easier for you to manage.

An assessment by a primary care provider is a good place to begin. Your Acacia medical provider can refer you to counseling or to psychiatric care. I encourage you to make an appointment at one of our family health care centers soon so we can further explore the cause and treatment options for your anxiety.

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