Dealing With Anxiety and OAB

by ERIC PATTERSON

Calm Body and Mind With OAB

The symptoms of overactive bladder (OAB) present as a constant frustration. The more you work to improve your state, the more it seems the symptoms of frequent urination and sudden, strong urges to urinate exert their power and influence.

You avoid going places you enjoy. You avoid seeing people you value. You avoid living your life because OAB gets in the way.

What if you have an incredible impulse while you are out? What if you need to make numerous trips to the bathroom? What if you cannot make it to the bathroom in time? What if OAB ruins your plans?

Too many times, the “what ifs” keep you at home. This may seem like the smart decision to make, but in reality, it only builds OAB’s control over your life. At home, you are cut off from your supports. You are removed from the positive places and activities you would take part in otherwise. The real culprit here is not OAB — it is anxiety.

Anxiety and OAB

Sure, OAB is a frustrating set of symptoms, but alone, it does not have to drastically change your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Unfortunately, OAB often travels in an intertwined relationship with the mental health disorder generally called anxiety.

The relationship is complicated between OAB and anxiety because it is bidirectional. OAB can create new anxiety just as anxiety can trigger new OAB symptoms.

If you doubt the presence of anxiety in your life with OAB, refer to the “what if” statements. These are the breeding ground of anxiety.

They are questions with no answers. They only foster fear, uncertainty, and self-doubt. Other symptoms of anxiety include:

- Physical tension in certain parts of the body or widespread throughout.
- Inability to sit still or frequent fidgeting.
- Feeling dizzy, lightheaded, hot flashes, or chills.
- Quickened or rapid heart rate and breathing patterns.
- Excessive worry about events in the future or situations from the past.
- Irrational fear or panic that seems appropriate to you.

Identification of anxiety in your life is hugely important, but it is not enough to improve your situation. To truly limit anxiety, you must address it actively with multiple methods.

Process Your Grief

Certainly, an OAB diagnosis is not a death sentence, but it does mean you have to grieve. The need for grief and mourning can be triggered by a number of situations including a medical diagnosis or other life change.

Processing the loss can be done effectively by working to identify and accept the way you are thinking and feeling about yourself and the situation that confronts you. A major aspect of this is the capacity to accept the reality of your state.

Life is different now as your needs and abilities have changed. Different does not have to mean worse. It only means you have a new set of challenges to overcome.

Confront the "What Ifs"

What if you need to get up from dinner 15 times? What if a meteorite crashes into your house? A compelling aspect of "what if" questions is that the scenarios always seem plausible, even when they are not.

The questions continue, though, because you do not answer them — until now. Starting today, provide a succinct answer to whatever "what if" comes to mind.

"What if I need to excuse myself from the movie multiple times? I will apologize to my friend and have them fill me in on what I missed." Problem solved. It is never the end of the world.

Expand Your Activity

Activity levels are inversely related to anxiety. As anxiety increases, activities lessen and narrow. If you wish to shrink your anxiety, you have to maintain and expand your activities.

Fear will be a barrier here as the "what if" questions swirl in your mind. Do your best to push through the walls even if it seems scary or anxiety provoking.

Your anxiety will make activities feel impossibly hard, but they are usually never as hard as they seem. You remain a competent, capable person regardless of OAB and anxiety.

Communicate Your Struggles

OAB and anxiety will pull you towards isolation. If you do not tell people about the situation you are in, these conditions tighten their hold and your supports will never be able to assist.

It's quite likely the important people in your life will have a novel solution or strategy you have not yet considered. If they do not have a life-changing solution, rest assured that talking about your problems gives you a fresh perspective for the future.

Find the Humor

Yes, OAB is a serious medical condition, but taking it too seriously gives anxiety the chance to develop and fester. You might be offended initially when people joke about OAB, but joining in the fun could be the best move you could make.

Laughing about your experiences and the situations you find yourself in will drastically reduce stress and tension, taking the fuel out of anxiety. To start this process, take a stressful OAB-related situation from the past and begin retelling the tragedy as a comedy.

You will find that only a few subtle changes are needed. Finding acceptance and confronting your embarrassment

will make the humor a reality.

Practice Relaxation

To best relax your body and your mind, you must take a direct route with relaxation therapy. These strategies encompass an incredible range of thought and behavioral changes that make a significant impact towards shrinking your anxiety.

Do not allow yourself to believe the lie that wasting time on your phone is relaxation. In most cases, it will equate to avoidance or escapism, which are helpful only in small doses.

Good options for relaxation include:

- Deep breathing techniques
- Progressive muscle relaxations
- Guided imagery exercises
- Autogenic training
- Meditation
- Yoga
- Sports and other forms of exercise
- Gardening

Overactive bladder and anxiety have a strong relationship, and it is your job to break them up. This challenging mission can be accomplished when you push yourself beyond what feels comfortable towards the direction of what is best for you, your loved ones, and your health.

Taking the difficult road will lead to real results. Choosing the easy way only leads to higher anxiety and worsening OAB symptoms. It seems like your choice is clear.