The Relaxation Benefits of Weighted Blankets

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Are There Benefits to Using Weighted Blankets for Anxiety?

You may have noticed an increase in the number of shops that now carry weighted blankets. Although they are suddenly more popular than ever before, can weighted blankets actually live up to the hype?

These blankets are designed to feel like a warm hug. They replicate the feeling of being held, which is why they can help to ease the symptoms of anxiety disorders, insomnia and other sleep disorders, chronic pain, osteoarthritis, and even autism.

What Are Weighted Blankets?

A weighted blanket is just that — a blanket with weight evenly distributed throughout. They come in a variety of weights and sizes, so that the user can choose the one that works best for them.

Unlike most blankets, these come in weights starting as light as four pounds and reaching up to 30 pounds. It is the pressure that they create against one’s body (as you lay beneath them) that provides health benefits.

The warmth of weighted blankets, combined with their ability to provide even and gentle pressure, imitates "deep pressure touch stimulation". This deep pressure touch (DPT) is a type of therapy that has been found to reduce chronic stress and high levels of anxiety through firm, hands-on pressure.
This stimulation has a calming and soothing effect on one’s mood, helping to ease feelings of anxiety.

Weighted Blankets for Anxiety

Many people who experience anxiety have reported the health benefits of weighted blankets. They are commonly used to reach a state of relaxation, helping the user get to sleep and to also achieve deeper sleep.

You may be wondering what it is about this extra weight that allows for relaxation and better sleep. Weighted blankets use a technique called "grounding" to literally ground your body by physically pushing it downwards.

Physical grounding has been shown to reduce high levels of cortisol, which is a stress hormone that is produced when your brain believes that you are in danger. High levels of cortisol can have an adverse effect on your immune system, increase your blood sugar levels and negatively impact your digestion.

If elevated for a long period of time, cortisol can also cause feelings of anxiety and depression, insomnia and weight gain.

Grounding Techniques for Anxiety

Practicing grounding techniques can assist you in calming anxious thoughts, including unwanted memories,

flashbacks and negative emotions. These techniques allow you to "ground" yourself in the present moment and experience what is happening around you, rather than focusing on any challenging thoughts.

There are many other physical techniques for grounding; these include deep breathing techniques, exercise, savoring a taste or smell, and listening to the sounds all around you. There are also mentally soothing techniques for grounding, like playing memory games, practicing self-kindness, sitting with a pet and listening to music.

The Benefits of Using Weighted Blankets for Relaxation

As weighted blankets offer DPT therapy, their use can promote relaxation and break the cycle of anxiety. This sense of relaxation can also release dopamine and serotonin, which are the neurotransmitters within the brain that help to fight feelings of stress, anxiety and depression.

Grounding the body while sleeping is a great way to ward off high cortisol levels during sleep. By simply using a weighted blanket during sleep, you may be able to alleviate stress, insomnia and pain.

As these blankets can mimic the feeling of being held, they can make you feel at ease, due to the release of oxytocin. This is a hormone that helps to reduce blood pressure, thus relaxing the body.

Pressure in certain areas of the body has also been found to release mood-improving chemicals — including serotonin — in the brain. Melatonin is also linked to serotonin production, and it can improve upon sleep quality and helps to regulate the sleep cycle.

Weighted blankets for relaxation offer an at-home therapy option that can be combined with other anxiety therapies or used alone. However, if you have a diagnosed anxiety disorder or are experiencing more than just mild symptoms, it is important that you follow an official treatment plan from your doctor or a mental health professional.

These calming weighted blankets can be found at numerous retailers, both in stores and online.

How to Choose the Best Blanket for You

Weighted blankets come in a variety of different weights and sizes, so it can be a bit overwhelming to figure out what option is best for you. As a general rule, a weighted blanket should be approximately 10% of your body weight.

Here is a simple chart to help you determine the weight that is best for you:

- 5 pounds = 50 pounds
- 10 pounds = 100 pounds
- 15 pounds = 150 pounds
- 20 pounds = 200 pounds
- 25 pounds = 250 pounds
- 30 pounds = 300 pounds

Other Considerations

You can also reach out to your health care professional for their recommendation on how heavy your blanket should be.

If you are going to use your weighted blanket on your bed, make sure to purchase a size large enough to cover your mattress. Otherwise, as long as the blanket is large enough to cover your entire body, it will provide you with the comforting feeling of being swaddled.

Choosing a blanket that is made from natural fibers is also a good idea, especially if you are going to use your

blanket while sleeping. Natural fibers are much more breathable than synthetic, therefore a blanket made from something like cotton will keep you cooler than a fabric like polyester.

The most important part of choosing a weighted blanket for yourself is to ensure that it is comfortable. If it is too heavy or too hot, it may worsen feelings of anxiety or restlessness.

You should always check with your doctor prior to introducing new tools or techniques to your treatment plan. Also, consult a medical professional prior to buying weighted blankets for anxiety if you have any conditions related to breathing (such as asthma), or if you plan to buy one for your child; though minor, weighted blankets do have some risks to be aware of and are not recommended for toddlers and small children (due to the increased risk of suffocation).