ANXIETY:

Start by introducing the subject on ANXIETY and letting people know that stress is different from anxiety and that you will be defining both and why. The illustration I used for this was about a panic attack that my wife had in the middle of the night. It came from out of nowhere. It scared both of us as she woke up first by shooting up from a dead sleep into a sitting position and then me shortly after with her gasping for air. It was a scary moment and it led to about 10 more minutes of panic. This is an illustration you can share personally or you can share this story as well By referencing “I was reading about a husband and wife…”

* There’s a fine line between stress and anxiety. Both are emotional responses, but stress is typically caused by an external trigger. The trigger can be short-term, such as a work deadline or a fight with a loved one or long-term, such as poverty, discrimination and chronic illness. People under stress experience mental and physical symptoms, such as irritability, anger, fatigue, muscle pain, digestive troubles and difficulty sleeping.
* Generally, stress is a response to an *external* cause, such as a tight deadline at work or having an argument with a friend, and subsides once the situation has been resolved. Because stress is caused by external factors, tackling these head-on can help.
* Anxiety is a person’s specific reaction to stress; its origin is *internal*. Anxiety is typically characterized by a constant feeling of dread…it nags and nags and wears you out and wears you down….as it just won’t go away…in situations that are not actually threatening. Unlike stress, anxiety persists even after a concern has passed.
* A panic attack, for example, is a symptom of anxiety, not stress. During a panic attack, people will experience symptoms like those of a heart attack, including chest pain, sweating, feeling faint, nausea, chills and breathing difficulties. It develops abruptly and usually peaks within 10 minutes.

BOTH ANXIETY AND STRESS lead to a nearly identical set of symptoms as stress: insomnia, difficulty concentrating, fatigue, muscle tension and irritability.

Anxiety disorders are the most common type of mental illness in the United States. Yet only 36.9 percent of people living with anxiety disorders receive treatment.

***Isaiah 35:4 (ESV)***

***Say to those who have an anxious heart, “Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.”***

***Psalm 121 (NLT) – (Take this psalm verse by and read the first half and then the reminder from the second part of the verse. When reading these verses stop and share reminders and personal examples from each verse.)***

***1 I look up to the mountains—
    does my help come from there?
2My help comes from the Lord,
    who made heaven and earth!***

***3He will not let you stumble;
    the one who watches over you will not slumber.
4Indeed, he who watches over Israel
    never slumbers or sleeps.***

***5The Lord himself watches over you!
    The Lord stands beside you as your protective shade.
6The sun will not harm you by day,
    nor the moon at night.***

***7The Lord keeps you from all harm
    and watches over your life.
8The Lord keeps watch over you as you come and go,
    both now and forever.***

CHALLENGE:

After breaking down Psalm 121 verse by verse, end with a few steps on how to deal with anxiety using these self-care tips:

* **Exercise.**Getting up and moving for at least 30 minutes a day (think walking, jogging or lifting weights) can help prevent anxiety before it starts.
* **Relaxation training.**Methodically tensing and relaxing certain muscle groups can help you voluntarily relax when anxiety is running high.

***John 14:27 “I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don’t be troubled or afraid.***

* **Read your Bible!**
* **Meditation.**Learning to clear your mind through meditation can be a great tool to alleviate anxiety and stay present***. Joshua 1:8 Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do.***