



What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is a feeling people experience when faced with a task that they don't feel comfortable in performing. Anxiety is a common feeling and everyone experiences this emotional state at some stage in their lives; however it is when these anxiety feelings breed chronic and distressing behaviour and interferes with daily living that an anxiety disorder is present.

Anxiety is the most common mental health problem in Australia, with nearly 10% of the population experiencing it's affects in their daily lives. Anxiety disorders can be distressing and debilitating. They may contribute to loss of educational and employment opportunities and difficulties in family and social relationships. There are six recognised groups of anxiety disorders.

Anxiety Disorders

- **OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER (OCD)**
 - OCD affects 2-3% of the population, up to 450,000 Australians
 - People with OCD are compelled to perform behavioural and mental rituals (compulsions)
 - People with OCD are usually aware of the irrationality and excessive nature of their compulsive behaviours
 - OCD can be an embarrassing disease, impacting on people's lives by:
 - Interfering with family and social relationships
 - Disrupting daily routines
 - Affecting capacity to fulfil employment and educational needs

- **PANIC DISORDER AND AGORAPHOBIA**
 - A panic attack is a brief episode of intense fear; a panic disorder is repeated incidences of a panic attack, triggered by the same situation each time.
 - Agoraphobia is a fear of open spaces, but in terms of a disorder, it is avoiding situation when and where panic has occurred before.
 - Panic attack symptoms include:
 - Shortness of breath
 - Dizziness and faintness
 - Increased heart rate
 - Trembling and shaking
 - Nausea or stomach upsets
 - Detachment feelings
 - Fearful of the environment



Anxiety

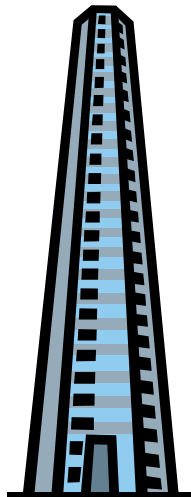


- **SOCIAL ANXIETY DISORDER**

- Affects up to 13% of population, who fear being scrutinised by unfamiliar people
- A person with a social anxiety disorder is afraid that they will act in a way that will be humiliating or embarrassing. They recognise that their fear and anxiety is excessive and unreasonable; however, they avoid social and performance situations or endure them with extreme anxiety or distress.

- **SPECIFIC PHOBIAS**

- Between five and 12 per cent of people have phobias. People with specific phobias experience excessive fear and anxiety cued by a specific object or situation.



<i>Phobia Name</i>	<i>Fear</i>
Claustrophobia	Confined spaces
Aquaphobia	Water
Herpetophobia	Reptiles and insects
Acrophobia	Heights
Mysophobia	Dirt and germs
Nyctophobia	Dark
Ophidiphobia	Snakes
Zoophobia	Animals
Brontophobia	Thunder
Aichmophobia	Needles
Arachnophobia	Spiders

- **POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)**

- A serious psychological reaction that develops in some people following exposure to an overwhelming, frightening or traumatic event, such as military service, a physical assault, car accidents and natural disasters
- PTSD is characterised by:
 - Intrusive symptoms intense memories or dreams of the event that are so vivid, it almost feels like the event is happening all over again
 - Avoidance symptoms withdrawal from people and situations in an attempt to stop traumatic memories.
 - Arousal symptoms people are constantly on guard, wary of potential dangers. They might experience problems sleeping and concentrating.

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• GENERALISED ANXIETY DISORDER (GAD)

- The main symptom of GAD is excessive persistent anxiety and worry, related to a number of events such as work or study, health, finances or family issues
- For a diagnosis of GAD, the anxiety, worry and physical symptoms must significantly interfere with a person's social, occupational or routine functioning
- GAD is accompanied by other physical and emotional symptoms such as restlessness or feeling on edge, being easily fatigued, having difficulty concentrating, irritability, muscle tension and sleep disturbance

Treatment for Anxiety Disorders

1. EDUCATION

- This is vital for recovery, as education is an important way to control symptoms

2. RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

- Anxiety sufferers have trouble relaxing, being able to release muscle tension is important. The use of progressive muscle relaxation, meditation and isometric exercises are techniques that have proven to be successful

3. CORRECT BREATHING TECHNIQUES

- Hyperventilation is a trigger for a number of panic attacks so it is important to know how to control the diaphragm to limit the chance of this occurring. Correct breathing means your abdomen moves and not your chest, where your diaphragm is doing the work.

4. COGNITIVE THERAPY

- Cognitive therapy focuses on changing patterns of thinking and beliefs that are associated with, and trigger, anxiety. Cognitive therapy strategies include rational 'self-talk', reality testing, attention training, cognitive challenging and cognitive restructuring. This includes challenging unhelpful fears and beliefs, and testing out the reality of negative thoughts.

5. BEHAVIOUR THERAPY

- The major component of this therapy is the exposure of sufferers to the causes of their anxiety. Exposure therapy involves deliberately confronting your fears in order to desensitise yourself. Exposure allows you to train yourself to redefine the danger or fear aspect of the situation or trigger.

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6. DIETARY ADJUSTMENTS

- The mineral magnesium helps muscle tissue to relax and a magnesium deficiency can contribute to anxiety, depression and insomnia. Inadequate intake of vitamin B and calcium can also exacerbate anxiety symptoms. Make sure your daily diet includes foods such as wholegrain cereals, leafy green vegetables and low fat dairy products. Nicotine, caffeine and stimulant drugs (such as those that contain caffeine) trigger your adrenal glands to release adrenaline, which is one of the main stress chemicals. Other foods to avoid include salt and artificial additives, such as preservatives. Choose fresh, unprocessed foods whenever possible.

7. EXERCISE

- Exercise burns up stress chemicals and promotes relaxation. Physical activity is another helpful way to manage anxiety, some physical activity at least three to four times every week will help sufferers to limit and control their stress symptoms and triggers.

8. ASSERTIVE BEHAVIOUR

- Being assertive means communicating your needs, wants, feelings, beliefs and opinions to others in a direct and honest manner without intentionally hurting anyone's feelings. A person with an anxiety disorder may have trouble being assertive because they are afraid of conflict, or else they believe they have no right to speak up.

9. BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM

- Anxiety sufferers often have low self-esteem attributed to the negative impact of the anxiety symptoms on their lives. These impacts may include feelings of isolation, depression, guilt, shame, and difficulties in functioning at school, work or in social situations. In raising self-esteem levels, it will help sufferers to overcome their symptoms.

10. STRUCTURED PROBLEM SOLVING

- Some people with anxiety disorders are 'worriers', who fret about a problem rather than actively solve it. Learning how to break down a problem into its various components - and then decide on a course of action - is a valuable skill that can help manage generalised anxiety and depression.

II. MEDICATION

- Psychological therapies, such as cognitive behaviour therapy, are much more effective than drugs in managing anxiety disorders in the long term. Your doctor may prescribe a brief course of tranquillisers or antidepressants to help deal with your symptoms of anxiety, however it is best to pursue behavioural change rather than a short term solution.

Seeking Help

Data Source:

1. Better Health Victoria
2. National Mental Health Council



Anxiety



Local community groups are a great way to find out if there are similar people in your community suffering from anxiety. The first step though, is to SEE YOUR DOCTOR!

Phone Assistance:

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| 1. Lifeline (local call cost) | 13 11 14 |
| 2. Kids Help Line | 1800 55 18 00 |
| 3. Just Ask Infoline | 1300 13 11 14 |
| 4. SANE Australia | 1800 68 83 82 |
| 5. Mensline | 1300 78 99 78 |
| 6. Mental Health Direct | 1800 22 04 00 |
| 7. Samaritans Help | 1800 19 83 13 |
| 8. Psychiatric Emergency Team | 1800 67 68 22 |



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