

What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is a term which describes the feelings people experience when faced with threat or danger or when stressed. Often people will feel upset, uncomfortable or tense.

Anxiety can sometimes be triggered by experiences such as job loss, relationship breakdown, illness, accidents or the death of someone close. In these situations, anxiety is usually experienced for a limited time.

An anxiety disorder is defined when anxiety is persistent, out of proportion to reality and significantly interferes with a person's daily life. An anxiety disorder can be typically accompanied by intense uncontrollable worry, avoidance of real or perceived anxiety provoking situations and panic attacks.



What Causes Anxiety?

Anxiety can be caused by a number of things that present as risk factors contributing to the development of an anxiety condition. Such factors include a genetic predisposition, stress



and lifestyle, chronic health conditions, substance abuse and mental health conditions just to name a few.

When feeling stressed, you may also feel anxious, and this leads some people to believe they may have an anxiety disorder. From the outset, it can be difficult to spot the difference as many of the physical symptoms are the same, like heart palpitations, sweating, insomnia and headaches. To make a diagnosis even more complex, prolonged stress can lead to anxiety and depressed, which is why it is so important to learn how to manage stress.

The key difference between stress and anxiety is the period of time in which symptoms are felt.

Everyone is different in how they experience anxiety and what might provoke the onset of anxiety or a panic attack, which is why it is important to recognise your individual signs and symptoms and seek professional help.

What is Anxiety?

Symptoms of Anxiety:

- Increased heart rate
- Difficulty breathing
- Perspiration
- Increased muscle tension
- Nausea
- Faintness
- Dizziness
- Dry mouth
- Insomnia
- Change in appetite
- Tremors
- Headaches
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How a Psychologist can help

It is difficult to know how to deal with anxiety, especially when it strikes as a panic attack or when it is mistaken for stress. Everyone is different in how they experience anxiety and what might provoke the onset of anxiety or a panic attack, which is why it is important to recognise your individual signs and symptoms and seek professional help. Speaking to a psychologist may help you deal with anxiety by equipping you with strategies to manage the symptoms and keep panic attacks under control.

How Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) Helps

CBT is an evidenced-based form of therapy that focuses on changing belief and thinking patterns that result in certain behaviours, namely anxiety. CBT is based on the understanding that thinking negatively is a habit and like any other bad habit, it can be modified. So in treating anxiety, our psychologists help people identify when their thought patterns are negative and replace them with more helpful thoughts, resulting in more positive behavioural outcomes.

Part of CBT in treating anxiety is monitoring your 'self talk' and testing realities of negative talk by evaluating the thoughts that lead to unhelpful fears and beliefs. For example, people who suffer from anxiety may avoid friends or social situations because of negative beliefs. The treatment focuses on questioning the negative thoughts and beliefs that lead to the feelings of anxiousness in social situations.

Finally, CBT not only helps you understand, manage and challenge thought and behaviour patterns but can also provide you with a range of useful strategies to enhance your productivity, well-being and your ability to cope with various situations in everyday life.