

ANXIETY

Disorders



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ANXIETY DISORDERS

We all experience anxiety. However, when feelings of intense fear and distress become overwhelming and prevent us from doing everyday activities, an anxiety disorder may be the cause.

SYMPTOMS

Anxiety disorders are a group of related conditions, each having unique symptoms. However, all anxiety disorders have one thing in common: persistent, excessive fear or worry in situations that are not threatening. People typically experience one or more of the following symptoms:

Emotional symptoms:

- Feelings of apprehension or dread
- Feeling tense or jumpy
- Restlessness or irritability
- Anticipating the worst and being watchful for signs of danger

Physical symptoms:

- Pounding or racing heart and shortness of breath
- Sweating, tremors and twitches
- Headaches, fatigue and insomnia
- Upset stomach, frequent urination or diarrhoea

TYPES OF ANXIETY DISORDER

- Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD)
- Social Anxiety Disorder
- Panic Disorder
- Phobias
- Agoraphobia
- Selective Mutism

Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD)

- Chronic, exaggerated worrying about everyday life
- Can consume hours each day, making it hard to concentrate or finish daily tasks
- Person with GAD may become exhausted by worry and experience headaches, tension or nausea.

Social Anxiety Disorder

- Intense fear about social interaction
- Often driven by irrational worries about humiliation (e.g. saying something stupid or not knowing what to say).
- Person may not take part in conversations
- Person may become isolated
- Panic attacks are a common reaction to anticipated or forced social interaction

Panic Disorder

- Characterised by panic attacks and sudden feelings of terror sometimes striking repeatedly and without warning
- Often mistaken for a heart attack
- Panic attack causes powerful physical symptoms including chest pain, heart palpitations, dizziness, shortness of breath and stomach upset
- Person may go to desperate measures to avoid an attack, including social isolation.

Phobias

- Certain places, events or objects create powerful reactions of strong, irrational fear
- Several things that can trigger those reactions
- Person may work hard to avoid their triggers
- The attempt to control fear can take over a person's life

Agoraphobia

- Causes people to avoid places and situations that might cause them to feel trapped, helpless, panicked, embarrassed, scared
- afraid of leaving their home for extended periods of time
- afraid of being alone in the social situation
- afraid of losing control in a public place
- afraid of being in places where it would be difficult to escape, such as a car or elevator
- detached or estranged from others
- anxious or agitated
- Often coincide with panic attacks

Selective mutism

- unable to speak in specific social settings
- often affects their academic performance and social relationships
- avoid eye contact, freeze, blush, or stare blankly when addressed by people whom they are unfamiliar with
- may withdraw, avoid or 'shut down' in social situations