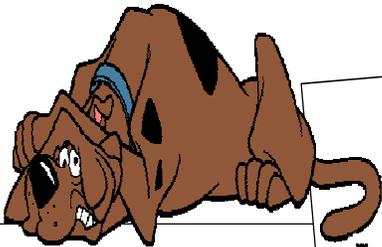


What is it?

Anxiety is the feeling of worry, apprehension, fear and/or panic in response to situations which seem overwhelming, threatening, unsafe or uncomfortable

Anxiety is your body's way of alerting you that some kind of action is needed in the face of a situation that is perceived to be threatening or dangerous



When is it harmful?

Anxiety becomes a problem when it interferes with life

If it becomes overwhelming and prevents you from taking appropriate actions or prompts you to take actions that are counterproductive

Anxiety may be detrimental if you avoid studying for a major exam that worries you, or if you cope with worry about your relationship by getting unnecessarily suspicious and then yelling at your partner

Anxiety

Panic Attacks:

Intense episodes of fear that often occur out of the blue and will peak within ten minutes and often even quicker

When this alarm system gets triggered you are likely to experience a series of physical and cognitive symptoms which can be overwhelming.

Some people have panic attacks but never develop Panic Disorder

There are many different explanations for this including a combination of genetic predisposition, childhood experiences and later life challenges faced by the individual

Often after someone has experienced a panic attack the worry of having another is what becomes debilitating

GAD:

A condition whereby you experience chronic and debilitating anxiety and/or worry

Your worry affects your ability to function in important areas of your life like work, home, school and your personal relationships

In addition, you also may experience a lot of physical symptoms that are related to the worry:

- Feeling restless or keyed up
- Difficulty concentrating
- Being easily fatigued
- Feeling irritable
- Experiencing muscle tension
- Having sleep difficulties
- Gastrointestinal discomfort including nausea and diarrhea
- Sweating

Specific Phobia:

There are many people who dislike certain things/situations and become anxious when in contact with them

However if one has a phobia, the thing/situation evokes intense distressing fear that significantly impacts their ability to function

There are many types of objects, animals and situations that could evoke this type of fear including: flying, driving, snakes, spiders, other animals (dogs, cats, etc.) heights, bridges and tunnels, dentists or doctors, elevators, blood, injections or injuries, storms, loud noises, illness and others

Social Anxiety:

Fear of being appraised or judged negatively by others and as a result, feeling embarrassed or humiliated

The fear is out of proportion to the actual situation but anxiety is uncontrollable (even though the person may know they are being irrational)

This will often result in avoidance of situations where you may feel that you will experience an increased likelihood of being judged negatively

NOTE:

If you think you may be struggling with any of the types of anxiety talked about, book an appointment with your doctor to talk about it

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder :

A condition in which you experience thoughts, images or impulses that come into your mind that are very disturbing to you and may make you feel anxious (Obsessions)

You may then need to perform certain acts or rituals in order to make yourself feel better or less anxious (Compulsions)

Adapted from Anxiety BC's "General Self-Help Strategies"
<http://www.anxietybc.com/resources/selfhelp.php>
University of Illinois' "Understanding and Treating Anxiety"
http://www.counselingcenter.illinois.edu/?page_id=195
Anxiety Disorders Association of Canada
<http://www.anxietycanada.ca/english/index.php>

Some Tips for Coping with Anxiety

Find out more about it – ask yourself these questions:

- What provokes the anxiety?
- What thoughts or physical sensations accompany the anxiety?
- How distressing is the anxiety?
- How are you coping with the anxiety?

Breathing:

Our breathing changes when we are feeling anxious - we tend to take short, quick, shallow breaths, or even hyperventilate

Calm breathing (sometimes called “diaphragmatic breathing”) is a technique that helps you slow down your breathing when feeling stressed or anxious

Often times people think “right, just breath and I’ll feel better...”

It seems simple but if done right, it has many beneficial effects (decreases heart rate, increases circulation, increase oxygen consumption which promotes relaxation...)

How to do it:

- Calm breathing involves taking smooth, slow, and regular breaths
- Sitting upright as it can increase the capacity of your lungs to fill with air
- 'take the weight' off your shoulders by supporting your arms on the side-arms of a chair, or on your lap
- Take a slow breath in through the nose, breathing into your lower belly (for about 4 seconds)
- Hold your breath for 1 or 2 seconds
- Exhale slowly through the mouth (for about 4 seconds)

• Wait a few seconds before taking another breath

Make sure that you aren't hyperventilating; it is important to pause for a few seconds after each breath!

- It takes PRACTICE!
- Try calm breathing for at least five minutes twice a day
- You do not need to be feeling anxious to practice – in fact, at first you should practice while feeling relatively calm

Things that can help manage anxiety:

- Daily physical activity
- A nutritious, well-balanced diet
- Adequate amount of sleep
- Emotional support from friends and family
- Work on creating realistic, attainable goals
- Reduce or eliminate the use of alcohol and drugs and limit caffeine intake
- Don't engage in “emotional reasoning” (e.g., “because I feel awful, my life is terrible”)
- Don't assume responsibility for events which are outside of your control

Muscle Relaxation:

A lot of anxiety is held subconsciously in our muscles and works to perpetuate the emotional parts of anxiety. Paying attention to your muscles and deliberately releasing the tension decreases anxiety all around.

How to do it:

- Start at your feet and work your way up your body
- Take a deep breath and at the same time tense up the muscle and hold for 5 seconds
- Release the tension in your muscle and exhale
- Repeat as necessary
- Foot (curl your toes downward)
- Lower leg and foot (tighten your calf muscle by pulling toes towards you)
- Entire leg (squeeze thigh muscles while doing above)
- Hand (clench your fist)
- Entire right arm (tighten your biceps by drawing your forearm up towards your
- shoulder and “make a muscle”, while clenching fist)
- Buttocks (tighten by pulling your buttocks together)
- Stomach (suck your stomach in)
- Chest (tighten by taking a deep breath)
- Neck and shoulders (raise your shoulders up to touch your ears)
- Mouth (open your mouth wide enough to stretch the hinges of your jaw)
- Eyes (clench your eyelids tightly shut)
- Forehead (raise your eyebrows as far as you can)