

What is Anxiety?

Anxiety can be both normal and abnormal. When it is normal it protects us from harm by warning us of threats or it makes us perform at a high level. When it is abnormal it causes us distress, harm, and interferes with our lives, often not protecting us and decreasing our performance levels.

Anxiety is a normal human emotion which is triggered when we perceive threats of harm. We need a fear response in order to warn us of threats and enable us to prepare for them. This response is called the flight or fight response.

The Physiology of Anxiety

Our physiology responds very quickly to threats when the anxiety response is triggered. A gland at the base of the brain called the pituitary gland secretes a number of hormones that make our adrenal glands secrete Adrenaline. This hormone then goes on to make our hearts pump faster, our lungs breathe faster, our muscles to become tense, our bodies sweat and our minds to narrow their focus. This is a very fast reaction and takes place within a second

We need this response so that we can prepare to take action like run away or fight. Whether we fight or fly our bodies need our hearts to pump more blood to the muscle and our lungs to breathe faster to supply more oxygen to our blood and our minds to narrow their focus in order to think fast. With all of this activity comes a great deal of heat which makes us sweat. Once this reaction has occurred we are ready to take action.

The effect of Anxiety today

As has already been explained Anxiety can be helpful. So when does it become harmful? In the modern world our minds can tend to find threats, worries and concerns every where we look, from deadlines at work, to global warming, to terrorism and simple health issues. This constant perception of threat can leave us living in a heightened state of arousal or anxiety. In some cases this state of anxiety is specific to certain situations such as in the case of phobias or social anxiety.

Our anxieties can be triggered by real experiences or imagined experiences. Our thoughts have a big impact on whether we perceive anxiety or not. Panic attacks can also occur because our minds may misinterpret our bodily sensations such as rapid heart beat. Anxiety can also be triggered by normal experiences such as exercise, tiredness and fatigue, drugs, thoughts about changes in our life situations or memories of things that happened to us as children.

Constant anxiety basically means we live in a state of fear which can never be good. It interferes with our careers, our relationships, we become hyper cautious, and constantly vigilant.

What are some types of anxiety?

There are many types of anxiety. The following is a list of the main types

- General Anxiety
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
- Panic Disorder
- Performance Anxiety
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Separation Anxiety
- Social Anxiety
- Specific Phobias

State Anxiety
Trait Anxiety

The Symptoms of Anxiety

The symptoms of Anxiety are many, they include mental, emotional, physical, behavioural and social.

Some of the mental symptoms of anxiety include:

Confusion
Hyper-reactivity
Hyper-sensitivity
Hyper-vigilance
Poor concentration
Poor judgment
Poor memory

Some of the emotional symptoms of anxiety include:

Agitation
Anger
Confusion
Fear about specific things Eg parties, health problems, spiders, memories
General fears for self and loved ones Eg safety, health, financial security

Anxiety can be specific or general

In the case of phobias the anxiety is about a specific thing such as a spider. In General Anxiety Disorder the fear is about many things such as safety, security, the future, health, the future the world at large and much more.

Some of the physical symptoms of anxiety include:

Gastrointestinal attack
Headaches
Heart palpitations
Joint pain
Muscle aches
Pain
Pain
Rapid breathing
Some of the physiological symptoms of anxiety include:
Sweating

Some of the behavioural symptoms of anxiety include:

As in the case of depression people who suffer anxiety will tend to:

Avoidance of performance
Avoidance of the feared thing
Drink excessively
Excessive attention to control or details in order to prevent mistakes

Indulge in promiscuity or reckless sex
Other reckless behaviours such as excessive spending
Social avoidance
Some people will avoid responsibility in order to decrease their anxiety
Take drugs

The key here is that the person will tend to avoid the experience of fear.

These are just some of the possible symptoms of anxiety. If you believe you or someone you know may be suffering with anxiety it is important that you or they get properly assessed by an appropriate health care professional.

What is the best treatment for anxiety?

As in the case of all mental health and wellbeing issues the best treatment for anxiety begins with an accurate assessment and treatment formulation. Because there are many forms of Anxiety each requiring different approaches it is absolutely critical that a correct assessment is made from the beginning. Once the correct assessment has been made the most appropriate treatment program can be implemented.

The best treatments are comprehensive and cover the mind, emotions, physical and social and in some cases medical aspects of human wellbeing.

What should you do if you or someone you know suffers with anxiety?

If you or a friend suffer from several of the above symptoms it is very important that you are properly assessed. Call for an appointment with a professional health care expert and begin get the help you need.