

Anxiety

All of us feel anxious sometimes. We may worry about things that might happen or have a restless night of sleep. But, people with an **anxiety problem** worry so much that it affects their lives in negative ways.

Anxiety is Different than Stress. Anxiety and stress have many of the same symptoms. The difference is that stress symptoms go away after the stress is over, anxiety symptoms are excessive and do not go away when the stress is over.

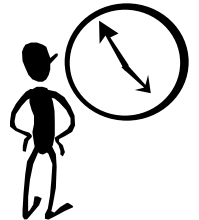
What are the common symptoms of anxiety?

Symptoms of anxiety are broken into 4 main categories:

(1) Emotions, (2) Body Responses, (3) Thoughts,(4) Behaviours

(1) Emotions (How we feel). We know we are feeling anxiety when we are also feeling anxious body responses, thoughts, or behaviours. Here are the most common feelings we have when we are anxious.

- ❑ Worried
- ❑ Fearful, Scared, Frightened, “Freaked out”
- ❑ Tense
- ❑ Trouble deciding, feeling unsure about things



(2) Body Responses (How our bodies react) The following symptoms are uncomfortable but not dangerous if they are only caused by anxiety. Talk to your doctor if you have these symptoms.

- ❑ Rapid heart, pounding heart
- ❑ Sweating
- ❑ Trembling or shaking
- ❑ Shortness of breath or smothering sensations
- ❑ Dry mouth or feeling of choking
- ❑ Chest pain or discomfort
- ❑ Nausea, stomach upset, gastro-intestinal upset
- ❑ Urge to go to the bathroom a lot
- ❑ Cold chills or hot flashes
- ❑ Dizziness, unsteady feelings, lightheadedness
- ❑ Numbing or tingling sensations
- ❑ Visual changes (e.g. light seems too bright, spots)
- ❑ Blushing or red blotchy skin (especially around the face)
- ❑ Muscle tension, aches, twitching, weakness or heaviness

(3) Thoughts (What goes through our minds) When we are anxious we think and notice things related to real or potential sources of danger. Here are some common thinking patterns related to anxiety.

- ❑ Frightening thoughts, images, urges or memories



- Something bad happening to yourself
- Something bad happening to someone else
- Some terrible event (house burning down, car crash,...)
- Increased scanning for signs of danger
- Difficulty concentrating on anything other than the worry
- Difficulty making decisions about things other than the worry
- Frightening dreams or nightmares

(4) Behaviours (How we respond). Anxiety triggers a number of coping behaviours. Most of us will feel a strong urge to do something to get rid of the danger or make us feel safer. These are called safety behaviours.

- Avoiding the feared person, place, experience
- Escaping or leaving the feared person, place, situation, experience
- Compulsive behaviours we repeat in order to feel better
- Sleeping or napping so we don't have to think about it
- Scanning the situation for signs of danger
- Telling ourselves reassuring things or getting support from others
- Self-medicating or using drugs/alcohol so you can't feel things
- Finding a safe place to go



How do you know if anxiety is a problem?

- **Symptoms have been excessive and difficult to control for more than a few days or weeks.**
- **Symptoms lead to a lot of emotional distress and personal suffering**
- **Symptoms interfere with work, school, home or social activities**

What is an Anxiety Disorder?

The main characteristics of anxiety disorder are: **Excessive Anxiety, Fear,** and **Avoidance** of things that trigger the fear. Types of anxiety disorders include: Panic disorder, agoraphobia, obsessive-compulsive disorder, social anxiety disorder, post-traumatic stress, specific phobias. Anxiety disorders are diagnosed by a doctor or by a psychiatrist.

Effective Treatment and Management of Anxiety

There are many ways to manage and treat anxiety. These include: counseling or therapy, cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), medication, other therapies such as relaxation training, yoga, or exercise are some examples. A doctor or counselor can help you find what's right for you.

How can you help? If you or someone you know may be suffering from an anxiety problem you can go to hospital or see your doctor.

- ✓ Need help right away? Call London Crisis Service 519-433-2023
- ✓ Talk to your doctor about your symptoms
- ✓ Encourage your family member to talk to a counselor or doctor

