

Anxiety Disorder

How It Can Affect You

Working Holistic psychotherapists have come to have great respect for the crippling effects that Anxiety Disorder can have on our lives. It is a multi-faceted disorder that affects body, mind, emotions, and spirit. Often it works on a nearly "**invisible**" level, undetected by outside observers. The person may appear competent and capable, all the while hiding his / her own inner hell through a flurry of activity, achievements, or endless chatter.

Other times, it is more visible and severely damages relationships with other people and ourselves. To the person with the disorder, it may have been there for so many years that it feels "normal".

To the addict, it may be what drove them into their addiction or it is what ***haunts them after they are sober***. To a person who experiences it for the first time, it is frightening and immobilizing.

WHAT IS IT?

Generalized Anxiety Disorder: Is the constant, exaggerated, worrisome thoughts and tension about everyday routine life events and activities. Usually *anticipating* the worst although there is little reason to expect it. For many, the elevated anxiety of GAD is accompanied by physical symptoms such as fatigue, trembling, muscle tension, irritability, irritable bowel syndrome, or frequent and severe headaches often leading to attempts of suicide.

Panic Disorder: Is the repeated episodes of intense fear that strike often and without warning. Physical symptoms include chest pain, heart palpitations, shortness of breath, hot flashes, dizziness, abdominal distress, feelings of unreality, fear of dying and often attempt of suicide.

Excessive anxiety and worry: Described as "dreadful thoughts about the future or excessive guilt about some past event", the mind cannot stay in "present time". It anticipates "worst case scenarios" which are frightening to the mind, body, emotions, and spirit. To defend itself against these dreadful possible outcomes, the mind then begins manufacturing "Plans A, B, C". Each anticipated dreadful scenario and back-up plan prompts the next dreaded events and necessary plans. Before you know it, the mind is producing a pyramid of fear, which feels like a thousand fists banging inside your head. These thoughts are always negative and pessimistic. The person feels victimized and powerless.

Difficult to control the worry: The thoughts and worries only intensify when we attempt to control them. A vicious cycle ensues, where the original anxiety and worries are compounded by anxiety and worry about not being able to stop it. There is nothing worse than not being able to sleep and staring at the clock, hour after hour, exhausted by the racing mind, worried about the lack of sleep, trying hard to go back to sleep and quiet the mind.

Anxiety and worry are accompanied by 3 or more of the following 6 symptoms"

- muscle tension
- restlessness or feeling keyed up or on edge
- irritability
- being easily fatigued
- difficulty concentrating or mind going blank
- sleep disturbance (difficulty falling or staying asleep)

Sometimes the Anxiety is so severe that it becomes a full-blown Panic Attack. In these instances, the Anxiety travels from the head into the body and causes symptoms which mimic a heart attack: Left untreated, the unrelenting anguish of an ***Anxiety Disorder will propel its "victim" into some attempt to escape its grip***. I will mention only two.

Addictive Disorders: The compulsive/excessive use of alcohol, drugs, spending, gambling, sex, chaotic codependent relationships, controlling, "busyness", work-aholism, perfectionism, sleeping pills, exercise, sugar, nicotine, caffeine are mood altering behaviors with disastrous consequences aimed at escaping anxiety.

Depressive Disorders: The Depressive Disorder is an attempt to "shut down" the body, mind, emotions, and spirit so they will not feel the anguish of the Anxiety Disorder.

WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?

Genetic pre-disposition: Just as we can inherit pre-dispositions for medical problems, such as a heart disease, cancer, and diabetes, we can inherit a high probability of developing a mental disorder or an addiction from either or both sides of our family tree. If you have a parent, grand parent, aunt, uncle, or sibling who has an Anxiety Disorder, you are at higher risk of developing one yourself. The "pre-disposition" is in your genes. It might lay dormant and never surface or it might suddenly surface when you are confronted by high stress in your environment.

Dysfunctional family of origin: The definition of a "dysfunctional family" is that one or more of the parents have a problem they deny and refuse to fix. Children develop anxiety as a realistic reaction to family dysfunction. The problem may be alcoholism, drug addiction, physical, mental, sexual, or spiritual abuse. The problem may be untreated Anxiety Disorder or other mental disorders.

Anxiety by a family member: We all know that children are influenced by their parents. Small children are fascinated by their parents. They watch their parents, follow them around, and imitate them. They are dependent on their parents to take care of them, feed them, and teach them. Parents are the truly the center of a child's universe. Imagine, then, the effect of a child living with a parent's Anxiety Disorder, especially if the disorder is untreated. What the child sees and hears is a steady dose of fear and the expectation that bad things are going to happen. It is as if the child is fed anxiety with the daily meal. One spoonful at a time, the child learns that the world is a scary place and he must be careful and cautious.

Loss, potential loss, or change: People are creatures of habit. When things stay the same, we get a sense of "security" and "predictability". In the transition between losing something and starting something new, we often lose a sense of who we are. That "**in between**" **period causes anxiety**. We know what we had, but we do not know what will happen in the future.

Trauma: Any assault to the integrity of an individual's body, mind, or spirit will result in pain and the fear that the trauma may recur in the future. There will be a tendency to hold onto the trauma and replay it. When the mind cannot stop replaying the event, anxiety is created. The far reaching effects of trauma can result in guilt, shame, self loathing, and frantic efforts to avoid re-victimization, through avoidance of intimacy. Sometimes the victims of trauma become perpetrators of trauma to others or set themselves up to be re-victimized. All of these reactions are driven by anxiety and cause further anxiety and anguish.

Constant Stress and Lack of Balance in Life: **Psychologists** believe that the increased number of clients being treated with Anxiety Disorders is related to changes in modern society. Society in general has become more materialistic. The pace of life has become hectic and often frenzied. There are single parent families, more children of divorce, more families with two working parents, and more families struggling with debt. Children are not allowed to relax after school, but are driven to a variety of special classes and competitive team sports. Working mothers and fathers arrive home frazzled, temperamental, and exhausted. Children are burdened with lengthy homework assignments and pressure to achieve high grade point averages for college. Families rarely eat leisurely, nutritious dinners together. Tempers are often short and conversations are kept to a minimum. Adolescents are often unsupervised and their emotional needs unattended, just as they venture further outside the home and are exposed to readily available drugs, alcohol, and peer pressure.

The result of this stress and excess is that they produce the same "fight-flight" — A Heightened Arousal State — associated with the symptoms of anxiety.

For people in recovery: some of the following changes or losses often cause anxiety and relapse:

- divorce, separation, or break up
- death of a loved one
- loss of employment, income, or power
- recent sobriety
- giving up using friends
- being alone
- DUI's or going to jail
- graduation from In-Patient programs
- friends relapse
- choosing a sponsor
- spouse or significant other infidelity

WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?

Here is a few suggestions:

Admit that you have Anxiety: That you are unable [to treat it by yourself](#). You have to admit that your coping mechanisms and efforts to escape it are not working. You have to admit that Anxiety is causing [problems in your relationship with your Self and the world around you](#). Do not judge or condemn yourself for having Anxiety. See professional help. Usually there is more to the puzzle then one piece.

Our guests come from all walks of life, from around the world; parents, students, business owners, executives, artists, entertainers, heads of State, doctors, government, college students, grandparents, celebrities individuals who are looking for a life free from the effects and influences of Stress, addictions and the unresolved psychological issues that drive their pain and uncontrollable behavior.

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