

## DIFFERENT TYPES OF ANXIETY

Everybody experiences anxiety of some sort. You can read more about different types of anxiety below.

### HEALTH ANXIETY

Someone with health anxiety spends a lot of time worrying about getting ill, even if a doctor has checked that they're fine. Whenever they experience a normal physical feeling such as a headache or a tight chest, they fear the worst. They might say things like: 'This means I must be seriously ill.' Feelings of anxiety develop and they start to panic.

A person with health anxiety might:

- look out for signs of illness a lot
- look up illnesses on the internet
- call somebody to get reassurance as soon as they feel a bit ill.



Relying on others to help you feel better and focusing on the physical sensations often just makes the anxiety worse and you can end up in a 'circle of panic'.



### SOCIAL ANXIETY

Someone with social anxiety worries about what other people think. They fear being judged in a bad way. They might avoid other people, especially big groups of people or parties. Even confident people can get nervous before a presentation, but with social anxiety the feelings are much more intense. Even imagining a situation where there might be pressure to talk to lots of people, or new people, can cause panic.

Situations that can cause distress include:

- being the centre of attention
- meeting new people
- talking in front of people
- parties or social gatherings
- being watched while eating or drinking.

Someone with social anxiety might:

- try not to be noticed
- avoid eye contact
- not talk
- fiddle with something
- sit in the corner
- hide behind their hair.

These things might feel like they help, but they can also make you more used to avoiding people. This can make you more anxious. Sometimes, doing small things that make you feel a little anxious can be a good thing. You might do something a few times and find out that it's not as bad as you thought.

## **PHOBIAS**

A phobia is a fear of a particular thing or situation.

Common phobias include the fear of:

- spiders (arachnophobia)
- heights (acrophobia)
- crowds or places where escape is difficult (agoraphobia)
- social situations (social phobia)
- closed or crowded spaces and not being able to escape (claustrophobia)
- injections (trypanaphobia).



When someone with a phobia sees or is reminded of the feared object or situation, their mind says they're in danger. This causes anxiety which can lead to panic.

To stop experiencing these feelings, people often avoid or run away from the thing they are afraid of. But by not 'facing the fear', your mind keeps on believing that it is something you should be afraid of. Overcoming a serious phobia can take time but treatment is available. It might be helpful to talk to your doctor about it.

### **POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)**



Somebody can develop PTSD after experiencing (or witnessing) something really traumatic, shocking or upsetting. Often a traumatic event is an event you keep on thinking about or replaying in your head. For example, sexual abuse, physical abuse, being in an accident, being a victim of crime, someone dying, or domestic violence.

Symptoms of PTSD include:

- flashbacks of images, sounds, emotions and physical feelings
- nightmares
- feeling jumpy
- loud noises, sudden movements, or things which remind you of the event making you panic.

Experiencing these symptoms can trigger really bad anxiety. People can also become very angry towards (or avoid) anything that reminds them of the event. When they experience this anxiety, they may feel an urge to escape. Running away from whatever has triggered the feelings, like with other anxiety disorders, may help you feel better for a little while. But then the thoughts or memories could come back.

Experiencing a traumatic event is a difficult thing to go through. It's important to talk to somebody about how you feel. Remember, you're not alone and things can get better.

### **OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER (OCD)**

Someone with OCD worries that something bad will happen. They feel they have to carry out a ritual to make things better and stop something bad from happening. This can cause a lot of anxiety.



For example, thoughts can include: 'Someone might steal all of my things out of my locker if I forget to lock it.' Anxiety kicks in. And they might then go around the house checking that all plugs and sockets are okay. This gives them a bit of relief from the anxiety for a little while, but only until they have another worrying thought. If this happens they may feel the need check everything all over again.

### **PANIC DISORDER**



Panic disorder is when people experience repeated panic attacks. Panic attacks are short periods of intense fear and unpleasant physical sensations. They come on suddenly but pass quite quickly. Find out more about panic attacks and why they happen.

People with a panic disorder feel anxious and scared about experiencing another panic attack. They might avoid anything that they feel might make them have a panic attack. Often they may feel a need to escape the situation if a panic attack happens. However, this can create more anxiety and panic in a 'vicious cycle'.

## **GENERALISED ANXIETY DISORDER (GAD)**

GAD is long-lasting worry and anxiety about general things. It's not caused by anything specific.

Someone with GAD might feel:

- restless and tense
- like they have 'butterflies in their stomach'
- unable to relax or sleep
- like even if things are going well, something may go wrong soon
- like they can't stop obsessing about things that do go wrong, even small things
- like they are 'caught in a loop' of worry.

If you start to feel like your anxiety is stopping you from doing things you love and enjoying life, it's a good idea to reach out and talk to someone or visit your doctor. They can work out with you what type of anxiety you might be having and talk you through the different treatment options.

