

ANXIETY DISORDERS

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Severe or prolonged anxiety arising from stress can cause a variety of disorders.

Three of the most common anxiety disorders are:

- Generalized Anxiety Disorder
- Phobias
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

Generalized Anxiety Disorder

- Person cannot identify the cause
- Have trouble coping under certain circumstances
- Display unusual fear and try to escape stressful situations
- Fear that dreadful things will happen
- Fears are for no apparent reason
- Sufferers may become so overwhelmed that they cannot function
- Anxiety/Panic attacks: accelerated heartbeat, faintness, numbness, sweating, rapid breathing, chills or flushed skin

Phobias

- A phobia is a form of anxiety that involves an intense, irrational fear of certain objects or situations.
- The fear involved is out of proportion with the dangers involved.
- Fears are classified as phobias only when they directly interfere with our lives.

Social phobia: a severe avoidance of people and a strong fear of doing anything in public for fear of being embarrassed

Phobias

- *Acrophobia* – fear of high places
- *Agoraphobia* – fear of open places
- *Algophobia* – fear of pain
- *Astraphobia* – fear of thunder or lightning
- *Claustrophobia* – fear of enclosed places
- *Hydrophobia* – fear of water
- *Lalophobia* – fear of public speaking
- *Phobophobia* – fear of fear
- *Xenophobia* – fear of strangers
- *Zoophobia* – fear of animals

Treatment for Phobias

Often a psychologist will suggest multiple treatments that may include:

- Systematic desensitization: using virtual reality or imagery exercise to desensitize patients to the feared entity (part of therapy); a method of reducing fear by gradually exposing people to the object of their fear
- Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) lets the patient understand the cycle of negative thought patterns and ways to change these thought patterns
- Hypnotherapy can be used to help remove the associations that trigger a phobic reaction
- Anti-anxiety medications can be of assistance in many cases

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder(OCD)

- ***Obsession*** – repetitive, unwelcome thought; persistent, unwanted
- ***Compulsion*** – repetitive, irresistible action; performing an act repeatedly in order to relieve the anxiety

Eating Disorders

- Eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia share characteristics with other obsessive-compulsive disorders.
- People with eating disorders are obsessed with their body image.
- Eating disorders can be very serious.
- Fortunately, many victims of eating disorders can be treated successfully through a combination of therapy and medications.

- The vast majority of sufferers are adolescent or young adult women. Men and older women also contract the disorder, but much less frequently.
- Eating disorders seem to arise as a way of dealing with anxiety. They stem from a range of societal, personal and family factors, but experts agree that these illnesses are often triggered by concerns about body image.

- Certain personality traits have been linked with eating disorders.
- Anorexics tend to be perfectionists.
- Bulimics tend to be impulsive and may engage in risky behaviour.

- The fact that eating disorders often run in families has led some to conclude that there may be a genetic component to the illness. However, others have suggested that behavioural and environmental factors could account for this trend in families where there is too much emphasis on weight and physical attractiveness.