

# Understanding Anxiety Disorders: Types, Symptoms, and Treatments

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Anxiety is experienced by everyone at some time. It can develop in response to various stressors, such as deadlines, social situations, the unknown, relationships, finances, and traffic. In reasonable amounts, anxiety can even serve as a helpful alert system, sharpening our focus when faced with challenges or threats. However, for some individuals, anxiety transcends normal levels, leading to debilitating conditions known as anxiety disorders. Fortunately, effective treatments are available to help those suffering from these disorders lead fulfilling lives.

## Types of Anxiety Disorders

**Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD):** Excessive persistent worry and anxiety about everyday situations and events characterize GAD. Symptoms of GAD typically include restlessness, irritability, muscle tension, difficulty concentrating, rumination about "what if" questions, uncertainty about the future, and apprehension about worst-case scenarios. Physical symptoms, including fatigue, headaches, and digestive problems are also common. The worry involved in Generalized anxiety disorder tends to be excessive, prolonged, and difficult to control. The level of distress caused by the symptoms can impair daily functioning and impact quality of life.

**Panic Disorder:** This disorder is characterized by a rapid onset of distressing physical and psychological symptoms, creating overwhelming feelings of terror and dread. Common panic attack symptoms include a pounding/racing heart, shortness of breath, chest pain, trembling or shaking, dizziness or lightheadedness, impending doom, sweating, chills or hot flashes, nausea, and a sense of losing control. During a panic attack, individuals often experience an intense urge to escape the situation or seek

immediate help. Fear of future panic episodes can impact their quality of life when they restrict their activities in response to their fears.

**Phobias:** Phobias are intense, irrational fears of specific things or situations. Phobias typically revolve around trying to manage fear by avoiding conditions that will bring you into contact with the object of the phobia. Common symptoms of phobias, when in contact with the feared object or context, include panic-type symptoms of rapid heartbeat, trembling, sweating, and shortness of breath. The distress and avoidance experienced are disproportionate to the actual threat. Trying to avoid these symptoms can significantly disrupt an individual's daily life. You could develop a phobia of just about anything.

**Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD):** Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) involves a range of distressing and intrusive symptoms that can significantly disrupt an individual's life. Obsessions are uncomfortable, persistent, unwanted thoughts, images, or urges. They often lead to compulsions. Compulsions are repetitive behavioral or mental acts aimed at reducing the anxiety or discomfort caused by the obsessions. Common symptoms of OCD include constant checking, excessive handwashing, counting, hoarding, and arranging items in a specific way. These behaviors persist in the face of recognition that they are irrational. Obsessions and compulsions take up a lot of time and energy and interfere with daily functioning, causing marked distress.

**Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):** Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder develops from experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event. The symptoms of PTSD can be profound and enduring. They include intrusive thoughts and memories of the traumatic event, avoidance behaviors, negative mood and thinking patterns, and heightened arousal symptoms such as increased irritability, difficulty sleeping, and an exaggerated startle response. PTSD symptoms can significantly disrupt a person's life, and the condition can persist for months or even years, impacting one's overall well-being and daily functioning.

While anxiety disorders can emerge at any age, they often become apparent during adolescence or early adulthood. Some individuals may have a genetic or family predisposition to specific anxiety disorders.

### **Importance of Seeking Treatment:**

Untreated anxiety disorders can lead to severe consequences. People with anxiety disorders may avoid things and situations that trigger or worsen symptoms. Avoidance behavior is often in conflict with daily responsibilities, living an enjoyable life, and adversely affects relationships. They can affect every aspect of a person's life and are related to other psychological problems, such as depression and substance use.

### **Effective Treatments:**

Fortunately, effective treatments are available for anxiety disorders. Treatment modalities such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Dialectical-Behavior Therapy, Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, and Medications are effective for different anxiety disorders. A combination of lifestyle changes, support systems, medication, and appropriate treatment options work together to provide the highest symptom relief that allows people to regain control over their lives.



Digital Download

**\$4.95**

Knowledge about anxiety disorders and strategies for managing them empowers you to regain control over your life. Consider complementing your understanding with a simple, Brief Lesson, "Mastering Worries With Thought Stopping Techniques." This concise guide equips you with an effective thought-stopping technique to take charge of your worries and reduce anxiety. By learning to identify and break free from the cycle of apprehension, mind-racing, rumination, and overthinking, you will gain another tool to empower yourself to reduce stress and regain control of your mental well-being. Let's continue our skill development with thought-stopping techniques that can assist you in mastering your worries and enhancing your peace of mind.