



Anxiety Disorders

What is an anxiety disorder?

Many people will experience anxiety from time to time. It's our natural response to scary situations that will prepare our bodies to either fight or run away from the situation. But for some people, anxiety will prevent them from living their everyday lives the way they would like to. People will differ in their responses to situations that can cause anxiety. Anxiety can vary in how severe it is, from a small amount of agitation all the way up to a scary panic attack.

Therefore we must remember that an anxiety disorder is completely different to normal stress or worry. It is different because it is a lot more severe, it lasts for a lot longer time and it will start to interfere with their normal day to day life.

What are some signs & symptoms of an anxiety disorder?

Anxiety can be shown in a number of different ways being physical (to our body), psychological (to our mind), and behavioural.

PHYSICAL

- Chest pains, fast heart beat
- Dizziness, head aches
- Muscle aches and pains
- Nausea and vomiting
- Restlessness

PSYCHOLOGICAL

- Poor concentration & memory
- Unable to make decisions
- Tiredness
- Unable to sleep thru the night
- Fear and worry

BEHAVIOURAL

- Using alcohol and or drugs to cope with situations
- Avoiding normal situations
- Distress in social situations
- Obsessive or compulsive behaviour

What are some possible causes of an anxiety disorder?

Anxiety is mostly caused by apparent threats in our surroundings, but depending on the person some are more likely than others to react with anxiety when they are in a situation where they feel threatened. The people who may be more at risk of this are:

- Someone who may have experienced a difficult childhood
- Have experienced a form of abuse including physical, or sexual abuse
- Have a parent who may have been very anxious all the time
- May be more sensitive and emotional about day to day activities

There are also some other factors that can lead to anxiety and these can include:

- Medical conditions including heart conditions and a vitamin B12 deficiency
- Some prescription drugs (always ask your local doctor about your prescriptions)
- Illegal drugs including Speed, ecstasy & cocaine
- And caffeine

Where can I go for help?

Sometimes we face events in our lives that we are unable to handle ourselves or with help of family and friends and sometimes there are situations in our lives that might be too much for us to cope with. In these cases, there are options out there for you to take.

Some of these options can include:

- Counselling (Someone to yarn too)
- Behavioural and Lifestyle changes (Health Choices)
- See a doctor who might give you medication that can help

If you just want to have a yarn or if you would like to find out more information contact any of your local Community Mental Health or other services listed below.

The Aboriginal Social & Emotional Wellbeing Fact Sheet Series was designed by the Aboriginal Social & Emotional Wellbeing workers David Freeman & Brenda Freeman based at Campbelltown Community Mental Health Service February 2009.

The information provided was adapted from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health First Aid Training Manual and the SANE Australia website. www.sane.org