

ANXIETY DISORDERS IN *Women*

THE ULTIMATE RESOURCE GUIDE



GET YOUR LIFE BACK NOW

LUBA HUTCHINS

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Introduction

The purpose of this guide is not to provide professional medical advice, but rather to create awareness to those who may be suffering from an anxiety disorder, and in turn provide them with the necessary information and resources to obtain the medical attention they may require.

Anxiety disorders in women show up in many forms, however, for those who suffer from them, life can become totally unmanageable, and in severe cases, come to an abrupt halt. Many who suffer from anxiety disorders, do not know they do, as the signs and symptoms often mimic those of other illnesses such as influenza, heart attack, headache, and more.

As a result, anxiety disorder is often misdiagnosed or is never brought to the attention of a qualified medical professional. Most anxiety disorders are highly treatable, however, only about a third of people who suffer from the disorders obtain treatment.

There is no specific reason anxiety disorders arise, as they are typically a culmination of a variety of factors including genetics, brain chemistry, personality, and life events. Based on information provided by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), anxiety disorders are considered a mental illness, and affect approximately 40 million Americans over the age of 18.

Women are more prone to have anxiety disorders, specifically in the areas of Generalized Anxiety Disorder, Panic Disorder, Specific Phobias, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, and Major Depressive Disorder. These will be discussed in greater detail later in this publication.

Anxiety Disorders In Women

Anxiety is a normal response to stress. But when it becomes hard to control and affects your day-to-day life, it can be disabling. Anxiety disorders affect nearly one in five adults in the United States. Women are more than twice as likely as men to get an anxiety disorder in their lifetime. Anxiety disorders are often treated with counseling, pharmaceuticals, or a combination of both. Some women also find that relaxation therapy such as yoga, meditation, and tai chi can also help with anxiety.

What is anxiety?



Anxiety is a feeling of worry, nervousness, or fear about an event or situation. It is a normal reaction to stress. It helps you stay alert for a challenging situation at work, study harder for an exam, or remain focused on an important speech.

In general, it helps you cope.

But anxiety can be disabling if it interferes with daily life, such as making you dread nonthreatening day-to-day activities like riding the bus or talking to a co-worker. Anxiety can also be a sudden attack of terror when there is no threat.

Anxiety breeds anxiety, meaning that as a person becomes anxious, for what ever reason, they begin to focus on thoughts and often believe that they are going crazy. These thoughts in turn, feed on each other and increase the levels of anxiety and

self consciousness. They intensify and magnify the problems or issues and distort reality.

What are anxiety disorders?

Anxiety disorders happen when excessive anxiety interferes with your everyday activities such as going to work or school or spending time with friends or family. Anxiety disorders are serious mental illnesses. They are the most common mental disorders in the United States. Anxiety disorders are more than twice as common in women as in men.

What causes anxiety disorders?

Researchers think anxiety disorders are caused by a combination of factors, which may include:

- Hormonal changes during the menstrual cycle
- Genetics. Anxiety disorders may run in families.
- Traumatic events. Experiencing abuse, an attack, or sexual assault can lead to serious health problems, including anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, and depression.

What are the signs and symptoms of an anxiety disorder?



Women with anxiety disorders experience a combination of anxious thoughts or beliefs, physical symptoms, and changes in behavior, including avoiding everyday activities they used to do. Each anxiety disorder has different symptoms.

They all involve a fear and dread about things that may happen now or in the future.

Physical symptoms may include:

- Shortness of breath
- Rapid heart rate
- Nausea
- Upset stomach
- Hot flashes
- Dizziness
- Stomach ache

Physical symptoms of anxiety disorders often happen along with other mental or physical illnesses. This can cover up your anxiety symptoms or make them worse.

How are anxiety disorders diagnosed?

Your doctor or nurse will ask you questions about your symptoms and your medical history. Your doctor may also do a physical exam or other tests to rule out other health problems that could be causing your symptoms.

Anxiety disorders are diagnosed when fear and dread of nonthreatening situations, events, places, or objects become excessive and are uncontrollable. Anxiety disorders are also diagnosed if the anxiety has lasted for at least six months and it interferes with social, work, family, or other aspects of daily life.

How are anxiety disorders treated?

Treatment for anxiety disorders depends on the type of anxiety disorder you have and your personal history of health problems, violence, or abuse.

Often, treatment may include:

- Counseling (called psychotherapy)
- Medications
- A combination of counseling and medicine

How does counseling help treat anxiety disorders?

Your doctor may refer you for a type of counseling for anxiety disorders called cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). You can talk to a trained mental health professional about what caused your anxiety disorder and how to deal with the symptoms.

For example, you can talk to a psychiatrist, psychologist, social worker, or counselor. CBT can help you change the thinking patterns around your fears. It may help you change the way you react to situations that may create anxiety. You may also learn ways to reduce feelings of anxiety and improve specific behaviors caused by chronic anxiety. These strategies may include relaxation therapy and problem solving.

What types of medications treat anxiety disorders?

Several types of medicine treat anxiety disorders. These include:

- **Antianxiety (benzodiazepines).** These medicines are usually prescribed for short periods of time because they are

addictive. Stopping this medicine too quickly can cause withdrawal symptoms.

- **Beta blockers.** These medicines can help prevent the physical symptoms of an anxiety disorder, like trembling or sweating.
- **Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs).** SSRIs change the level of serotonin in the brain. They increase the amount of serotonin available to help brain cells communicate with each other. Common side effects can include insomnia or sedation, stomach problems, and a lack of sexual desire.
- **Tricyclics.** Tricyclics work like SSRIs. But sometimes they cause more side effects than SSRIs. They may cause dizziness, drowsiness, dry mouth, constipation, or weight gain.
- **Monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs).** People who take MAOIs must avoid certain foods and drinks (like Parmesan or cheddar cheese and red wine) that contain an amino acid called tyramine. Taking an MAOI and eating these foods can cause blood pressure levels to spike dangerously. Women who take MAOIs must also avoid certain medicines, such as some types of birth control pills, pain relievers, and cold and allergy medicines. Talk to your doctor about any medicine you take.

All medicines have risks. You should talk to your doctor about the benefits and risks of all medicines. Learn more about medicines to treat anxiety disorders.

What if my anxiety disorder treatment is not working?

Sometimes, you may need to work with your doctor to try several different treatments or combinations of treatments before you find one that works for you.

If you are having trouble with side effects from medicines, talk to your doctor or nurse. Do not stop taking your medicine without talking to a doctor or nurse. Your doctor may adjust how much medicine you take and when you take it.

What if my anxiety disorder comes back?

Sometimes symptoms of an anxiety disorder come back after you have finished treatment. This may happen during or after a stressful event. It may also happen without any warning.

Many people with anxiety disorders do get better with treatment. But, if your symptoms come back, your doctor will work with you to change or adjust your medicine or treatment plan.

You can also talk to your doctor about ways to identify and prevent anxiety from coming back. This may include writing down your feelings or meeting with your counselor if you think your anxiety is uncontrollable.

Can complementary or alternative medicine help manage anxiety disorders?

Maybe. Some women say that complementary or alternative medicine (CAM) therapies helped lower their anxiety.

CAM therapies that may help anxiety include:

- **Physical activity.** Regular physical activity raises the level of brain chemicals that control mood and affect anxiety and

depression. Many studies show that all types of physical activity, including yoga and Tai Chi, help reduce anxiety.

- **Meditation.** Studies show meditation may improve anxiety. Regular meditation may help by boosting activity in the area of your brain responsible for feelings of serenity and joy.

Will my anxiety disorder treatment affect my pregnancy?

If your treatment is counseling, it will not affect your pregnancy.

If you are on medicine to treat your anxiety disorder, talk to your doctor. Some medicines used to treat anxiety can affect your unborn baby.

If I take medicine to treat my anxiety disorder, can I breastfeed my baby?

It depends. Some medicines used to treat anxiety can pass through breastmilk. Certain antidepressants, such as some SSRIs, are safe to take during breastfeeding.

Do not stop taking your medicine too quickly. Talk to your doctor to find out what medicine is best for you and your baby. Learn more about medicines and breastfeeding in our Breastfeeding section. You can also enter your medicine into the LactMed® database to find out if your medicine passes through your breastmilk and any possible side effects for your nursing baby.

How do anxiety disorders affect other health conditions?



Anxiety disorders may affect other health problems that are common in women. These include:

- **Depression**

Anxiety disorders can happen at the same time as depression.

When this happens, treatment for both anxiety and depression may not be as effective. You may need a combination of treatments, such

as counseling and medicine.

- **Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)**

IBS symptoms are common in people with anxiety disorders. Generalized anxiety disorder is also common among people with IBS. Worry can make IBS symptoms worse, especially gastrointestinal (GI) symptoms such as upset stomach or gas. GI symptoms can also be stressful and lead to more anxiety. Although treatments for IBS can help treat anxiety, it's important that you treat both conditions.

- **Chronic pain.**

Anxiety disorders are common in women with certain diseases that cause chronic pain, including rheumatoid arthritis, fibromyalgia, and migraine.

- **Cardiovascular disease**

Anxiety and depression increase the risk for heart disease, the leading cause of death for American women. Anxiety can also make recovery harder after a heart attack or stroke.

- **Asthma**

Studies link asthma to anxiety disorders. Stress and anxiety can trigger asthma attacks while the shortness of breath and wheezing during asthma attacks can cause anxiety. Studies show that breathing retraining may help asthma control and ease anxiety.

What is the latest research on anxiety disorders and women?

Researchers are studying why women are more than twice as likely as men to develop anxiety disorders and depression. Changes in levels of the hormone estrogen throughout a woman's menstrual cycle and reproductive life (during the years a woman can have a baby) probably play a role.

Researchers also recently studied the male hormone testosterone, which is found in women and men but typically in higher levels in men. They found that treatment with testosterone had similar effects as antianxiety and antidepressant medicine for the women in the study.

Other research focuses on anxiety disorders and depression during and after pregnancy and among overweight and obese women. For more clinical trials related to anxiety disorders and women, visit ClinicalTrials.gov.

What are the major types of anxiety disorder?



Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD)

People with GAD worry excessively about ordinary, day-to-day issues, such as health, money, work, and family. With GAD, the mind often jumps to the worst-case scenario, even when there is little or no reason to worry.

Women with GAD may be anxious about just getting through the day. They may have muscle tension and other stress-related physical symptoms, such as trouble sleeping or upset stomach. At times, worrying keeps people with GAD from doing everyday tasks. Women with GAD have a higher risk of depression and other anxiety disorders than men with GAD. They also are more likely to have a family history of depression.³

People with generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) go through the day filled with worry and tension, even though there is little or nothing to cause it. They anticipate disaster and are overly concerned about health issues, money, family problems, or difficulties at work.

Sometimes just the thought of getting through the day produces anxiety. GAD is diagnosed when a person worries excessively about a variety of everyday problems for at least six months. It affects about 6.8 million adult Americans and about twice as many women as men.

Symptoms of Generalized Anxiety Disorder

- Unable to relax
- Startle easily
- Difficulty concentrating
- Trouble falling asleep or staying asleep
- Fatigue
- Headaches
- Muscle tension
- Muscle aches
- Difficulty swallowing
- Trembling
- Twitching
- Irritability
- Sweating
- Nausea
- Light-headedness
- Having to go to the bathroom frequently
- Feeling out of breath
- Hot flashes

Treatment for GAD

If you think you have an anxiety disorder such as GAD, the first person you should see is your family doctor. A physician can determine whether the symptoms that alarm you are due to an anxiety disorder, another medical condition, or both.

Early treatment can help keep the disease from progressing to its later stages, and people can learn effective ways to live with this disorder. Treatment options include:

- Medications
- Cognitive therapy to change or get rid of destructive thought patterns
- Behavioral therapy to change a person's behavior
- A combination of these treatments

Additional Resources for Generalized Anxiety Disorder

- [Anxiety \(Copyright © The AGS Foundation for Healthy Aging\)](#) - This fact sheet discusses the symptoms of anxiety, the types of anxiety disorders, and diagnosis and treatment. It is written for the elderly population.
- [Anxiety Disorders](#) - This publication provides information about the different anxiety disorders, including obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), panic disorder, and social phobia, among others.
- [Generalized Anxiety Disorder \(Copyright © Mayo Foundation\)](#) - This website provides general information about the signs, symptoms, causes, and treatment of generalized anxiety disorder.

- [Generalized Anxiety Disorder \(GAD\)](#) - This website provides information on generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), including its signs and symptoms, treatment, and where to find help. It also links to publications about GAD from the National Institute of Mental Health.
- [Generalized Anxiety Disorder \(GAD\) \(Copyright © Anxiety Disorders Association of America\)](#) - This fact sheet explains the symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) and how you can treat it. It also links to a self-test so you can see if you are at risk of having GAD.
- [Screening for Generalized Anxiety Disorder \(GAD\) \(Copyright © Anxiety Disorders Association of America\)](#) - Take this simple yes-or-no self-test, then bring the results to your doctor. Your answers to these questions can help your doctor determine whether your symptoms indicate generalized anxiety disorder.
- [When Worry Gets Out of Control: Generalized Anxiety Disorder](#) - This easy-to-read booklet explains what generalized anxiety disorder is, when it starts, how long it lasts, what the symptoms are, and how to get help.

Other Organizations To Check Out

- [Anxiety Disorders Association of America](#)
- [Freedom From Fear](#)
- [Mental Health America](#)
- [National Institute of Mental Health, NIH, HHS](#)
- [The AGS Foundation for Health in Aging](#)

- Flushes or chills
- Fear of losing control
- Fear of dying

Because these attacks are so unpredictable, many women may have intense anxiety between panic attacks. While most attacks last a few minutes on average, sometimes they can last as long as 10 minutes. In rare cases, they may last an hour or more.

Treatment for Panic Disorder

If you think you have an anxiety disorder such as panic disorder, the first person you should see is your family doctor. A physician can determine whether the symptoms that alarm you are due to an anxiety disorder, another medical condition, or both.

Early treatment can help keep the disease from getting worse, and people can learn effective ways to live with this disorder.

Treatment options include:

- Medications
- Cognitive therapy to change or get rid of destructive thought patterns
- Behavioral therapy to change a person's behavior
- A combination of these treatments

Additional Resources for Panic Disorder

- [Mental Health America](#)
- [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#)
- [National Institute of Mental Health, NIH, HHS](#)
- [National Mental Health Consumers' Self-Help Clearinghouse](#)

Social Anxiety Disorder / Social Phobia



Social phobia, also called social anxiety disorder, is diagnosed when people become overwhelmingly anxious and very self-conscious in everyday social situations.

People with social phobia have a strong fear of being watched and judged by others and of doing things that will embarrass them. They can worry for days or weeks before a dreaded situation. This fear may become so severe that it interferes with work, school, and other ordinary activities, and can make it hard to make and keep friends.

Physical symptoms that often accompany social phobia include:

- Blushing
- Sweating
- Trembling
- Nausea
- Difficulty talking

Social phobia affects about 15 million American adults and affects women and men in equal numbers. People with social phobia often have other anxiety disorders and/or depression as well. Substance abuse can develop if a person with social phobia uses alcohol or drugs to soothe their anxiety.

Treatment for Social Anxiety Disorder / Social Phobia

If you think you have an anxiety disorder such as social phobia, the first person you should see is your family doctor. A physician can determine whether the symptoms that alarm you are due to an anxiety disorder, another medical condition, or both.

Treatment options include:

- Medications
- Cognitive therapy to change or get rid of destructive thought patterns
- Behavioral therapy to change a person's behavior
- A combination of these treatments

More information on Social phobia / Social Anxiety Disorder

Additional Resources for Social Anxiety Disorder

- [Screening for Social Anxiety Disorder \(Copyright © Anxiety Disorders Association of America\)](#) - This self-test can help you determine if the social discomfort you feel is part of social anxiety disorder. Your doctor can interpret the results, and if necessary, recommend treatment options for you.
- [Social Anxiety Disorder \(Copyright © Anxiety Disorders Association of America\)](#) - This brochure explains the difference between normal anxiety and social anxiety disorder (SAD). It answers some basic questions about SAD, offers advice on how to manage your anxiety, and provides resources for getting help.
- [Social Anxiety Disorder \(Social Phobia\) \(Copyright © Anxiety Disorders Association of America\)](#) - This fact sheet describes Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD) and links to books and a self-test for SAD.

- [Social Anxiety Disorder and Alcohol Abuse \(Copyright © Anxiety Disorders Association of America\)](#) - It isn't unusual for people with social anxiety disorder to also have a problem with alcohol abuse. This fact sheet can help you determine if your alcohol use is becoming a problem, and if so, where you can get help.
- [Social Anxiety Disorder and Social Phobia \(Copyright © Helpguide.org\)](#) - This fact sheet describes different situations in which someone with social anxiety disorder would feel anxious, and explains the symptoms and treatment of the disorder.
- [Social Phobia \(Copyright © Nemours Foundation\)](#) - This fact sheet is written for teens but has great advice about overcoming social phobia for people of all ages. It contains a breathing exercise for relaxation and tips for defeating negative self-talk.
- [Social Phobia \(Social Anxiety Disorder\)](#) - This easy-to-read booklet on social phobia (social anxiety disorder) explains what it is, when it starts, how long it lasts, and how to get help.

Other Organizations To Check Out

- [Anxiety Disorders Association of America](#)
- [Freedom From Fear](#)
- [Mental Health America](#)
- [National Institute of Mental Health, NIH, HHS](#)

Specific phobia



A specific phobia is a strong, irrational fear of something that poses little or no actual danger. Some of the more common specific phobias are:

- Closed-in places
- Heights
- Escalators
- Tunnels
- Highway driving
- Water
- Flying
- Dogs
- Injuries involving blood

Such phobias aren't just extreme fear; they are irrational fear of a particular thing. You may be able to ski the world's tallest mountains with ease but be unable to go above the fifth floor of an office building. While adults with phobias realize that these fears are irrational, they often find that facing, or even thinking about facing, the feared object or situation brings on a panic attack or severe anxiety.

Specific phobias affect an estimated 19.2 million adult Americans and are twice as common in women as men. They usually appear in childhood or adolescence and tend to persist into adulthood. The causes of specific phobias are not well understood, but there is some evidence that the tendency to develop them may run in families.

If the feared situation or feared object is easy to avoid, people with specific phobias may not seek help. Treatment is needed if the phobia hurts a person's career or personal life.

Treatment for OCD

If you think you have an anxiety disorder such as specific phobia, the first person you should see is your family doctor. A physician can determine whether the symptoms that alarm you are due to an anxiety disorder, another medical condition, or both.

Specific phobias respond very well to carefully targeted psychotherapy.

Additional Resources for Specific Phobias

- [Phobias \(Copyright © Mayo Foundation\)](#) - This publication defines phobias, including information about causes, symptoms, risk factors, and when you should see a doctor.
- [Specific Phobias \(Copyright © Anxiety Disorders Association of America\)](#) - this web page gives specific examples of

normal anxiety and how it differs from phobia. It explains how phobias can affect your life, what causes them, and where you can go to get treatment. It also includes a self-test to help you decide whether you should see your doctor.

Other Organizations To Check Out

- [American Psychological Association](#)
- [American Psychological Association](#)
- [Anxiety Disorders Association of America](#)



Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)

People with obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) have thoughts (obsessions) or rituals (compulsions) which happen over and over again.

Rituals — such as hand washing, counting, checking on a specific item (like whether the oven was left on), or cleaning — often are done in hope of stopping the thoughts. Doing these rituals, though, gives only short-term relief. Ignoring the urge to do the ritual greatly increases anxiety. Left untreated, obsessions and the need to perform rituals can take over a person's life. OCD is often a chronic, relapsing illness.

People with OCD sometimes have other mental health disorders, such as depression, eating disorders, substance abuse, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, or other anxiety disorders. When a person also has other disorders, OCD is often harder to diagnose and treat. A person can have symptoms of OCD at the same time as, or that are part of, other brain disorders, such as Tourette's syndrome. Getting the right diagnosis and treatment of other disorders is important to successful treatment of OCD.

Treatment for OCD

If you think you have obsessive compulsive disorder, the first person you should see is your family doctor. A physician can determine whether the symptoms that alarm you are due to an anxiety disorder, another medical condition, or both.

Research shows that people with OCD have patterns of brain activity that differ from people with other mental illnesses or people with no mental illness at all. There is also proof that both

behavioral therapy and medication can help people with OCD. A type of behavioral therapy known as "exposure and response prevention" is very useful for treating OCD. In this approach, a person is exposed to whatever triggers the obsessive thoughts, and then is taught ways to avoid doing the compulsive rituals and how to deal with the anxiety.

- **Additional Resources for OCD**

- [Employees With Mental Health Impairments \(Copyright © Job Accommodation Network\)](#) - This report outlines basic information about common limitations, useful questions to consider, and accommodation possibilities for people who have psychiatric disabilities.
- [Mental Health Services Locator](#) - This website will help you locate mental health treatment facilities and support services in your state.
- [Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder \(Copyright © Anxiety Disorders Association of America\)](#) - This publication explains what obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is and discusses the causes, symptoms, and treatments. It also includes an OCD self-test that you can go over with your doctor.
- [Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder \(Copyright © Mental Health America\)](#) - This publication provides statistical information on obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), including causes and treatments.
- [Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder \(OCD\)](#) - This publication explains what obsessive-compulsive disorder is, including its signs, symptoms, and treatment options. It also links patients to support services and treatments.
- [Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder: What It Is and How to Treat It \(Copyright © American Academy of Family](#)

[\(Physicians\)](#) - This online publication provides information on obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and other common obsessions, compulsions, and illnesses related to OCD.

- [Overcoming OCD: A Guide for College Students \(Copyright © OCD Chicago\)](#) - This manual for college students explains how having obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) might affect your success in school and in life and offers advice about who to talk to and how to get help. It also explains the difference between OCD and obsessive-compulsive personality disorder.
- [Relief From OCD: A Guide for People With Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder \(Copyright © OCD Chicago\)](#) - This guide dispels many of the myths about obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and sets the record straight on how it can affect your life. It also describes some of the common related or co-occurring conditions that affect people with OCD, and gives advice about how to choose a therapist.
- [Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder: When Unwanted Thoughts Take Over](#) - This easy-to-read booklet on obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) explains what it is, when it starts, how long it lasts, and how to get help.

Other Organizations To Check Out

- [American Psychological Association](#)
- [Freedom From Fear](#)
- [International OCD Foundation, Inc.](#)
- [Mental Health America](#)
- [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#)

- [National Institute of Mental Health, NIH, HHS](#)
- [National Mental Health Consumers' Self-Help Clearinghouse](#)
- [OCD Chicago](#)

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

PTSD starts after a scary event that involved physical harm or the threat of physical harm. The person who gets PTSD may have been the one who was harmed, or the harm may have happened to a loved one or even a stranger.

It's natural to be afraid when you're in danger. It's natural to be upset when something bad happens to you or someone you know. But if you feel afraid and upset weeks or months later, it's time to talk with your doctor. You might have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Living through or seeing something that's upsetting and dangerous can cause PTSD. This can include:

- Being a victim of or seeing violence
- The death or serious illness of a loved one
- War or combat
- Car accidents and plane crashes
- Hurricanes, tornadoes, and fires
- Violent crimes, like a robbery or shooting

There are many other things that can cause PTSD. Talk to your doctor if you are troubled by something that happened to you or someone you care about. Your doctor can help you find out if you have PTSD. Call your doctor if you have any of these problems:

- Bad dreams
- Flashbacks, or feeling like the scary event is happening again
- Scary thoughts you can't control

- Staying away from places and things that remind you of what happened
- Feeling worried, guilty, or sad
- Feeling alone
- Trouble sleeping
- Feeling on edge
- Angry outbursts
- Thoughts of hurting yourself or others

PTSD starts at different times for different people. Signs of PTSD may start soon after a frightening event and then continue. Other people develop new or more severe signs months or even years later.

Treatment for OCD

PTSD can be treated. A doctor or mental health professional who has experience in treating people with PTSD can help you. Treatment may include "talk" therapy, medication, or both.

Treatment might take 6 to 12 weeks. For some people, it takes longer. Treatment is not the same for everyone. What works for you might not work for someone else. Drinking alcohol or using other drugs will not help PTSD go away, and may even make it worse.

Additional Resources for PTSD

- [Anxiety Disorders](#) - This publication provides information about the different anxiety disorders, including obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), panic disorder, and social phobia, among others.

- [Employees With Post Traumatic Stress Disorder \(Copyright © Job Accommodation Network\)](#) - This publication for employers offers basic information about issues specific to employees with post-traumatic stress disorder. The article discusses the issues that can affect these individuals, offers suggestions for employers and also includes example scenarios as well as a list of resources for further information.
- [Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder](#) - Many people develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) after living through something that is upsetting and dangerous. This publication discusses the importance of getting help for symptoms associated with PTSD, and provides a checklist of the physical and mental symptoms of PTSD.
- [Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder \(Copyright © Mental Health America\)](#) - This fact sheet provides a detailed overview of post-traumatic stress disorder, including its causes, symptoms, and ways to recovery.
- [Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder \(PTSD\)](#) - This page links to helpful information from the National Institute of Mental Health about PTSD.
- [Posttraumatic Stress Disorder \(PTSD\) \(Copyright © Anxiety Disorders Association of America\)](#) - This web page describes the three main categories of symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. It also discusses who is at risk of having PTSD.
- [PTSD in Children and Adolescents](#) - This fact sheet provides information about PTSD symptoms and treatment in children.

- [Screening for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder \(Copyright © Anxiety Disorders Association of America\)](#) - Complete this quick self-test and bring the answers to your doctor. He or she can tell if you have PTSD, and if so, recommend treatment options.
- [What Is Posttraumatic Stress Disorder \(PTSD\)? \(Copyright © New York Online Access to Health\)](#) - This website provides links to online publications with in-depth information about post-traumatic stress disorder, including its symptoms, causes, and treatment options.

Other Organizations To Check Out

- [Anxiety Disorders Association of America](#)
- [Freedom From Fear](#)
- [Mental Health America](#)
- [National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder](#)
- [National Institute of Mental Health, NIH, HHS](#)
- [Sidran Institute](#)
- [Veterans' Families United](#)

More information about anxiety disorders

For more information on anxiety disorders, call the OWH Helpline at 800-994-9662 or contact the following organizations:

- [MentalHealth.gov, HHS](https://www.mentalhealth.gov)
- [National Institute of Mental Health \(NIMH\), NIH, HHS](https://www.nimh.nih.gov)
Phone Number: 866-615-6464
- [Anxiety and Depression Association of America](https://www.adaa.org)
Phone Number: 240-485-1001
- [National Alliance on Mental Illness](https://www.namh.gov)
Phone Number: 800-950-6264
- [National Mental Health Consumers' Self-Help Clearinghouse](https://www.nmhc.org)
Phone Number: 800-553-4539

Simple 4 Step Self Help Strategy



Anxiety can take many forms, and can range from mild to severe, therefore it is vital to seek professional help, and receive a proper diagnosis from a licensed medical practitioner. However, there are ways to manage and cope with milder forms of chronic anxiety.

Following is a simple strategy to do just that. Remember that although it is simple it is not necessarily easy. Just like anything worth doing, the more you put in, the better the results will be. This system takes work, and more importantly, practice. The key is to not give up.

The strategy is general in nature, and can be applied to any anxiety disorder. The four steps are as follows:

1. Become an anxiety expert
2. Learn relaxation techniques
3. Be conscious of your thoughts
4. Expose yourself to fears

Step 1. Become An Anxiety Expert

If you have recognized that anxiety is affecting your life in a negative way, it is your obligation to yourself to learn everything you can about anxiety and what effect it has on you. Early awareness of the signs and symptoms can have a tremendous impact nipping it in the bud before it gets out of hand. Knowing

why you are feeling anxious is vital helping you manage and control your anxiety.

Three areas of focus when learning about anxiety are thoughts, behaviours, and physical symptoms. Thoughts refer to the way we interpret a situation, behaviours refer to what we do in an anxiety induced situation, and physical symptoms refer to the way our body reacts when face with an anxiety induced situation.

For example:

You are spending a nice day with your boy friend or husband, your cell phone rings, and you recognized the number to be that of an ex-boy friend.

Thought: Oh my gosh! He probably wants to get together

Physical Symptoms: Heart begins racing and legs feel weak

Behaviour: You don't answer the phone, tell your boy friend it was the wrong number, and you decide not to return the call.

Step 2. Learn Relaxation Techniques

There are many ways to relax, some with longer term effects like yoga, tai chi, and qui dong, however, when encountered with an situation causing anxiety, you need something more immediate to take the edge off of the anxiety. Here are two simple techniques.

Deep Slow Breathing

With practice, deep, slow, breathing will allow you to calm down very quickly. We tend to breathe faster, hyperventilate, and sometimes forget to exhale when we are anxious. This can have the effect of making us feel nervous, and even more anxious.

Deep, slow, breathing involves taking slow and deep breaths. Breathe in through the nose, pause, then breathe out through the mouth, pausing for several seconds before taking another breath.

Start by doing this for 2-3 minutes and increasing the length of time as you feel more comfortable with it.

Muscle Relaxation:

Muscle relaxation takes more time than its deep, slow breathing counterpart and may have longer lasting effects. It is essentially a method of relaxation which uses the tensing and release of muscle groups throughout body.

It is important to find a quiet place and set aside approximately 15-30 minutes to perform the exercise.

Begin by starting at the feet, lower legs, upper legs, stomach, chest, neck, shoulders, and face. In each muscle location, tense the muscle for 5 seconds and release for 5-10 seconds. Once you have completed the entire body you should feel the tension gone.

Ensure you take your time and practice.

Step 3. Reality Check Your Thoughts

As James Allen states in his classic book, “As A Man Thinketh”, thoughts are things. People with anxiety disorders tend to view the world from a negative perspective, and have an unrealistic paranoia. They let their head make up stories generally around the world being threatening or dangerous. Their thoughts become things to them.

Much has been written about ways to change thinking, and most are based on replacing “anxious” or “worried” thinking with realistic or balanced thinking. To do so, you must learn to see

things in a clear and fair way, without being overly negative or focusing only on the bad. It takes time to shift anxious thinking, so be patient and consistently practice these skills.

Step 4. Expose Yourself To Fears

The most important and most difficult step in managing your anxiety involves being vulnerable by exposing yourself to your fears. A common behavior of anxiety sufferers is avoidance. Avoidance of certain situations, avoidance of people, avoidance of places, and avoidance of things. Underlying the avoidance is fear. A fear that can be almost paralyzing.

These fears take on a life of their own and by internalizing them, they have an intangible power over the anxiety sufferer. By stepping out of the comfort zone and facing, or exposing yourself to these fears, it takes the power away. As previously mentioned, this is an extremely difficult step as you must take action and make yourself vulnerable. However, once you begin to see positive results, you will see the benefits in the exercise and feel much more comfortable with it.

To maximize results, this must be done in a pre-planned and methodical manner. Here is the process:

Create An Anxiety List

Make a list of situations, people, places, and things which create anxiety in you. Prioritize the list from the items which cause the least anxiety to the ones which cause the most anxiety. Write down absolutely everything you can think of and add entries as new anxieties come up.

Create An Action List For Each Anxiety

Starting with the item which induces the least anxiety, write out a step by step action list. When you begin writing out the

steps the tendency will be to not include thing that you fear. You must write these down and not dwell on them until they come up. The list should have a goal in mind, and begin with the easiest to attain steps.

Start Facing The Fear

Although this is the toughest step, it is the most valuable step as it will allow you to cope with and possibly overcome anxiety.

Begin by engaging your lowest anxiety situation and try to stay in the situation as long as you can. Be consciously aware of your behaviors, thoughts, physical symptoms, and overall level of anxiety. Try to quantify exactly how you feel and determine whether your level of anxiety increases or decreases and time goes. Rank it on a scale of 1-10, with 1 being the lowest level of anxiety and 10 being the highest. Monitor and track your progress by keeping a diary or journal of all the above.

Work on this one situation and do it often. Repetition is a key in conquering anxiety disorders. When you have achieved a consistent level of anxiety between 1 and 3, move onto the next. Continue doing this until you have completed the entire list.

Make Yourself Vulnerable

You may have heard the expression “use it or lose it”, and when it comes to anxiety disorders, it should be at that forefront of your mind. It is difficult to say whether anxiety is curable, but it has been proven that it is treatable. And, in turn, one of the most effective treatments is exposure to anxiety situations.

Just when you think you have anxiety conquered, it can appear faster than you can blink an eye. That is why it is so important to be vulnerable and put yourself in situation which may initially feel uncomfortable, but become easy over time. Do this until it becomes second nature.

Conclusion

I would like to thank you for purchasing this publication and hope you found it useful.

Anxiety disorders are treatable and those who experience them can move on and live a normal life. Although this publication was geared toward women, all the concepts and information is equally applicable to men.

I want to re-iterate that the information provided here, is in no way a replacement for professional medical help. This publication is meant to be an information and resource guide, with the intent of creating awareness of various types of anxiety disorders, their signs and symptoms, possible treatments, and a self-help method for mild to moderate disorders.

Again, I thank you for your support, and wish you all the best.

Luba Hutchins

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