

Types of Anxiety

Anxiety comes in many forms. Here are brief definitions of some:

Social Anxiety

People with social anxiety experience a fear of being in social situations and being around other people. They might worry that people are judging them or laughing at them. They might be worried about saying or doing the



‘wrong’ thing in public. People with social anxiety might struggle in public places such as in town, in restaurants, in the work place, at social gatherings and in settings where they have to meet new people. They might feel very frightened about being around other people and may try to avoid social situations or social activities.

Many people with Asperger Syndrome or High Functioning Autism struggle with social situations, and coping with non-autistic people, which could easily lead to feelings of anxiety.

Specific Phobias

A specific phobia is when you are very afraid of a particular thing or situation, such as spiders, heights or flying, even when there is no actual danger. You might know that you are not in any real danger, but still feel intensely afraid. Specific phobias can interfere with your life, for example you might not be able to sleep if there is a spider in your bedroom or you

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might avoid visiting places you want to go to because you are afraid of heights.

Sometimes specific phobias are caused by a bad experience. For example, if you are bitten by a dog, you might become phobic of dogs. However, not all specific phobias have a cause.



Separation Anxiety

People with separation anxiety have difficulty being away from particular people or places. For example, someone with separation anxiety may feel anxious when away from their parents or partner or if they are away from their home.

It is normal to feel a little nervous being away from people you know, especially if you are not used to this. It is also perfectly normal for some people to find it hard to be away from home, especially if they are away for quite some time. An example of this would be people who feel 'homesick' when they are on holiday.

Feeling very anxious when away from home or people you know becomes a problem when it prevents you from leaving people or places you are familiar with and stops you going out or taking part in activities.

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

People with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder have persistent thoughts (or 'obsessions') and fears that are overwhelming. They deal with these feelings by taking part in repetitive behaviours (or 'compulsions').



An example would be someone who is constantly afraid of germs so repeatedly washes things to get rid of these germs and avoids things they believe to be 'dirty' like public toilets, even if they really need to go. Another example is people who are so afraid of losing things or throwing things away that they hoard them to the extent that their home may be very untidy and full of items they don't actually need.

For some people, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder can take the form of persistent negative thoughts, such as constantly wanting to say or do inappropriate things. People may be so afraid of acting on these thoughts that they are too scared to leave their home.



Panic Attacks

A panic attack is when someone suddenly develops feelings of intense fear which causes them to experience physical effects such as rapid heart rate, breathlessness, dizziness and shaking. They might feel like they can't breathe or like they are going to

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faint. In some people the physical effects create a cycle, making the person feel more afraid which causes the physical symptoms to get worse.

It is important to remember that a panic attack will always pass and is not harmful or dangerous. A panic attack usually passes after a few minutes, although it can take a bit longer for the anxiety to go away completely.

Sometimes panic attacks have an obvious cause, for example, being in a crowded place. However, some panic attacks have no clear cause and are part of the person's wider experience of anxiety.

If you do experience panic attacks, remember that they always pass after a short time and cannot do you any harm. There are useful techniques for controlling and reducing panic attacks which will be discussed below.

Generalised Anxiety

Generalised anxiety is when someone feels fear and extreme nervousness most of the time that does not have a specific cause. People with Generalised Anxiety might worry about different areas of their life such as work, relationships and health, even when there is nothing wrong, or they might simply feel anxious a lot of the time without worrying about anything specific.

It might seem difficult to control anxiety that doesn't have a clear cause, but it is possible and the techniques below will help.

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