

ANXIETY DISORDERS

Anxiety disorders are quite common and include several types with varying features. Although anxiety disorders can be quite disabling, the good news is they are very treatable.

TYPES OF ANXIETY DISORDERS

Panic Disorder is characterized by intense feelings of fear or terror, which come on for no apparent reason. Symptoms may include: dizziness, trembling, shortness of breath, heart racing, sweating and chest pain.

Agoraphobia is characterized by avoiding situations in which one feels trapped or places where one is out of their comfort zone. The fear can be so intense that it leads some individuals to become completely housebound.

Social Phobia is characterized by avoidance of everyday social situations due to fear of judgment by others or embarrassment. For example, fear of public speaking or eating in restaurants.

Specific Phobia is characterized by avoidance of a specific situation or object due to fear. For example, fear of heights or spiders.

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder is characterized by recurring unwanted anxiety-producing thoughts or feelings (obsessions) and repetitive, unwanted behaviours (compulsions). The excessive amount of time given to these obsessive thoughts and compulsive actions leads to interference with daily functioning. For example, fear of germs or constant washing hands.

Generalized Anxiety Disorder is characterized by excessive worrying about normal daily activities. Often leading to restlessness, difficulty concentrating, irritability, muscle tension, headache, fatigue and sleep disturbance.

TIPS TO HELP COPE WITH ANXIETY DISORDER

Whether you are just having normal anxiety or you have an anxiety disorder, these tips can help you cope:

1. *EXERCISE* – Exercise helps your body release pent-up stress.
2. *RELAX* – Breathe deeply and consider trying yoga.
3. *SLEEP WELL* – Try to get eight hours of sleep a night.
4. *LEARN TO LAUGH* – Challenge negative thinking.
5. *LIMIT ALCOHOL & DRUG CONSUMPTION* – They are depressants and may make you feel depressed.
6. *EAT A WELL BALANCED DIET* – Stay away from junk food, sugar or caffeine. Caffeine can make anxiety worse.
7. *ADD VARIETY TO YOUR LIFE* – Take up a hobby and enjoy life.
8. *CREATE A SUPPORT NETWORK* – Talk to friends you can trust.
9. *LEARN TO MANAGE YOUR TIME* – Don't put things off and overwhelm yourself.
10. *CHALLENGE YOUR PERFECTIONISM* – Chill out, praise yourself for trying.

Sometimes professional treatment may be required, such as counselling or medication.

HOW TO HELP A FRIEND

People who struggle with anxiety disorders need more than just counselling and medication, they need supportive friends like you. If someone close to you has an anxiety disorder, here are some ways you can help:

- *Educate yourself* – Understanding what your friend is going through will help you better support them. It will also help alleviate frustrations about their behaviour that you may have.
- *Be supportive* – Encourage your friend when they are having a tough time and be empathetic to what they are going through. Be respectful.
- *Don't try to change them* – Modify your expectations of how you want your friend to be and accept them for who they are.
- *Communicate* – Be sure to listen with a nonjudgmental attitude. Help them find treatment. Sometimes it's hard for them to take the first step alone. Be a good support person and help encourage your friend to get help.
- *Be fun* – Sure it's good to have someone to talk to, but your friends need you to keep the fun going. Help make them laugh and relax.



CHECK THESE OUT:

<http://www.macanxiety.com>

<http://www.cmha.ca>

<http://www.adaa.org>