

Anxiety

What is an anxiety disorder?

Everybody experiences anxiety at some point in time. Anxiety is a natural response, useful in helping us to avoid dangerous situations and motivating us to solve everyday issues. Anxiety can vary in severity from mild uneasiness through to a terrifying panic attack. It can vary in how long it lasts, from a few moments to many years.

Anxiety disorders may be caused by environmental factors, genetics, brain chemistry, substance abuse, or a combination of these. It is most commonly triggered by the stress in young people's lives. Usually anxiety is a response to outside forces, but it is possible that young people make themselves anxious with 'negative self-talk' – a habit of always telling themselves the worst will happen.

General symptoms of anxiety

Anxiety can manifest itself in a variety of ways: physical, psychological and behavioural.

Physical effects:

- Cardiovascular – palpitations, chest pain, rapid heartbeat and flushing
- Respiratory – hyperventilation and shortness of breath
- Neurological – dizziness, headache, sweating, tingling and numbness
- Gastrointestinal – choking, dry mouth, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea
- Musculoskeletal – muscle aches and pains (especially neck, shoulders and lower back), restlessness, tremor and shaking

Psychological effects:

- Unrealistic and/or excessive fear and worry (about past and future events)
- Mind racing or going blank
- Decreased concentration and memory
- Difficulty making decisions
- Irritability, impatience, anger
- Confusion
- Restlessness or feeling on edge and/or nervousness
- Tiredness, sleep disturbances, vivid dreams
- Unwanted unpleasant repetitive thoughts

Behavioural effects:

- Avoidance of situations
- Repetitive compulsive behaviour e.g. excessive checking
- Distress in social situations
- Urges to escape situations that cause discomfort (phobic behaviour)

At home a young person may:

- Be tearful in the mornings and say they don't want to go to school
- Spend more time doing school work or express unnecessary concerns that the work isn't good enough
- Complain of headaches and other physical symptoms (sometimes real, but sometimes as an attempt to avoid going to school)
- Demand constant reassurances from parents
- Be irritable and snappy in interactions with family
- Spend a lot of time worrying about their appearance and behaviour leading up to social events or being reluctant to attend at all

At school a young person may:

- Be extremely well-behaved and quiet, fearful of asking questions
- Demand extra time from teachers, asking questions constantly and requiring a lot of reassurance
- Regularly fail to hand in work on time, due to either procrastination or perfectionism tendencies
- Complain of sudden physical illness such as stomach aches and headaches, especially when exams or presentations are scheduled
- Spend a lot of time on their own at lunch and breaks
- Visibly appear to be anxious (sweating, agitated and rapid breathing)

Helpful Resources: Anxiety organisations

AnxietyUK www.anxietyuk.org.uk

Telephone: 08444 775 774 (Weekdays 9:30 - 17:30) Text Service 07537 416 905

Helps all those suffering with anxiety disorders. Self-help leaflets and contact lists. Self-help groups, counselling, phone self-help groups, email support. Section on Young people and anxiety.

No Panic www.nopanic.org.uk

Telephone: 0844 967 4848 (10:00 - 22:00)

Youth Helpline: 0330 606 1174 (Weekdays 15:00 - 18:00)

No Panic is a registered charity which helps people who suffer from Panic Attacks, Phobias, Obsessive Compulsive Disorders and other related anxiety disorders including those people who are trying to give up Tranquillizers.

OCDAction www.ocdaction.org.uk Telephone: 0845 390 6232 Email: support@ocdaction.org.uk

Information and support for Obsessive Compulsive Disorders

(OCDs) and related disorders including Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD), Skin Picking (CSP), Trichotillomania (TTM) compulsive hair pulling.

OCD-UK www.ocduk.org

Information and support relating to OCDs in children and young people. Produces useful friendly guides including a teen's guide, children's guide and parent's guide www.ocduk.org/childrens-ocdguide www.ocduk.org/parents-guide-to-ocd

CBTOnline www.getsefhelp.co.uk CBTselfhelp site. **Useful publications**

Touch and Go Joe:

An Adolescent's Experience of OCD by Joe Wells, Jessica Kingsley

Publishers ISBN-10:

1843103915

This book tells the story of young Joe Wells who faced OCD during his teenage years, a book we would recommend to anyone wanting an easy to understand experience of coping with Obsessive-

compulsive disorder.

NICE clinical guidelines:

- Common mental health disorders (CG123) 2011 Anxiety

(CGI 13) 2011

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (CG26) 2005

- Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and body dysmorphic disorder (BDD) (CG31) 2005

Finding a therapist

Counsellors and psychotherapists are listed in the Yellow Pages. The following organisations have national lists of therapists:

The British Psychological Society www.bps.org.uk Find a psychologist near you: www.bps.org.uk/bpslegacy/dcp Telephone: 0116 254 9568

British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Therapists www.babcp.com Email: babcp@babcp.com

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy www.bacp.co.uk Email: bacp@bacp.co.uk

Telephone: 01455 883300

Tweet: @BACP

Text: 01455 560606

Useful Apps: Depression and anxiety

BASE http://www.solentcamhs.nhs.uk/page_sa.asp?fldKey+247

Developed by Solent NHS Brookvale CAMHS service, this app helps children struggling with depression and anxiety track their emotions and pinpoint the times when they feel the most stressed or anxious in between CAMHS appointments. It may be useful for children to share their BASE activity with their healthcare professional.

Get Self Help www.getselfhelp.co.uk

This website offers free cognitive behavioural based self-help and therapy resources, including worksheets and self-help mp3s.

MindShift <https://www.anxietybc.com/resources/mindshift-app> MindShift is designed to help teens and young people cope with anxiety by teaching them how to relax, develop more helpful ways of thinking and identify active steps to help take charge of anxiety.

MoodKit <http://www.thriveport.com/products/moodkit/> Approved by NHS Choices and listed as one of Healthline's Best Apps for Depression 2017, this app uses CBT principles to help people with depression and anxiety manage and track their moods. It has a 'thought checker' to identify negative thoughts and an 'activities' tool to suggest wellbeing activities.

MoodTools Depression Aid <http://www.moodtools.org/>
This app provides six evidence-based tools to aid clinical depression and negative moods. It contains info, self-tests, videos, a thought diary, activities, and a suicide safety planning feature to help keep the person safe when they are feeling distressed.

Positive Penguins (for children) <http://positivepenguins.com/>
Aimed at 8-12-year-olds, this app helps children understand their feelings and challenge negative thinking. Four positive penguins take children on a journey to help them better understand the relationship between what they think and what they feel.

SAM
<http://sam-app.org.uk/>
This is a self-help app for anxiety which includes a personal toolbox, negative thought buster, colouring exercise and information. Developed by researchers at University of West England and winner of Best Anxiety App 2016 in the Healthline awards.

Stop Panic and Anxiety Self-Help <https://www.excelatlife.com/apps.htm#panicapp>. This is a selfhelp app for people experiencing panic attacks. It can provide immediate audio assistance during a panic attack and help prevent panic attacks. As it is targeted to specifically help panic attacks, it may not be suitable for all other forms of anxiety. Listed as one of the Best Anxiety Apps 2017 by Healthline.

Youper (for Social Anxiety) <http://www.youper.co/start-now>
This evidence-based app has been developed to help people with social anxiety gain confidence in social situations. Using the principles of CBT, ACT (Acceptance Commitment Therapy) and MBSR (Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction), it aims to help people understand their anxiety, control it, and then challenge it using real-life guided practice exercises.
The Essential Trail (4 programs) is free, then users pay to personalise their app experience according to their needs.