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Guide to Recognizing and Managing Anxiety Disorders

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What is An Anxiety Disorder

Anxiety Disorder 101

[Anxiety disorder](#) is the term used to define pathological fears, phobias, anxieties and nervous conditions that either appear suddenly or develop over time. It may affect daily activities.

Oftentimes, anxiety disorders affect the emotions of the individual. Both terms, anxiety and fear, have specific meanings in a scientific usage. Normally, they are interchanged.

Here's a clearer explanation. When pertaining to phobia, it is a kind of anxiety that is somehow irrational. On the other hand, fear is said to be the physiological and emotional response to anything that poses to be a threat.

Anxiety Disorders affect around 40 million Americans age 18 years and above in a year. This makes them fearful and uncertain of various situations. There is the relatively mild case, which is brief anxiety due to a stressful event. An example is publicly speaking in a room full of strangers or going out on a first date with someone you really like.

[How to Handle Anxiety Disorder](#)

But there are cases of anxiety disorders, which can get out of hand when not treated as soon as possible. This can last for as long as six months. If it is ignored, it will only make the matter worse.

Generally, anxiety disorders occur alongside substance or alcohol abuse. It masks the anxiety symptoms. Sometimes, it even makes the situation worse. There are cases when the illness has to be treated before the individual can respond to the anxiety disorder treatment.

There are various therapies out there that are effective in [treating anxiety disorders](#) . More and more researchers are also uncovering treatments that can assist people suffering from the illness.

If you think that you are suffering from any kind of anxiety disorder, it is best that you ask your physician about it and the best treatment you can go through.

Is it Anxiety Disorder?

Then again, how do you know whether this is already a disorder or you're merely anxious? Almost everyone is anxious at times. We face challenges on a daily basis – from workplace pressures like demanding schedules or school concerns like exams can already result in worry and fear.

However, people who have anxiety disorder are those who intently acknowledge this fear and are subject to prolonged and intense feelings of distress and fright for no apparent reason. This condition can even turn their life into something uneasy and fearful, thereby interfering in their relationships with family and friends, as well as colleagues.

To give you a clearer picture, think of Meryl Streep's character in "Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events." She's afraid of the fridge falling off a boy and even realtors.

The Problem and the Solution

Out of all the mental health problems, anxiety disorders are the most common. It is said that around 1 out of 10 people are suffering from it. It is more prevalent with women than with men and can affect both children and adults.

The sad part about this is that anxiety disorder is often mistaken for instability or mental weakness, thus giving the individual a social stigma and discouraging him to seek help. One must understand anxiety disorder as the first step to remove the stigma. Once this has been done, then people with anxiety disorders are encouraged to try out the various treatments available.

If you have anxiety disorder or you know someone who does, visit your physician. He or she can easily determine whether the symptoms you have are from anxiety disorder, a mental condition or even both. The next step is to [get treatment](#) .

Do not be afraid to seek assistance from psychiatrists, social workers, counselors and psychologists. It is also best that you look for a professional that has specialized training in behavioral therapy or cognitive-behavior. Make sure that he or she is also open to using medications when the situation calls for it.

You have the right to inquire what kind of therapy he or she normally uses and whether medications are or are not available. You must feel comfortable with the therapy you are going through. If you feel queasy

or ill at ease, then you can ask about the other kinds of therapy he or she offers.

If you have been under medication, do not quit the drugs abruptly. You have to taper the dosage under the guiding eyes of a physician you trust. You can ask him or her how to stop your medication.

What Are the Different Anxiety Disorders

Kinds of Anxiety Disorders

Anxiety disorder is a common chronic disorder, affecting women more than men. This can lead to impairment. It is long-lasting anxiety that is not specific to any object or scenario. Therefore, it is free-floating.

People suffering from this disorder often feel nervous, worried or afraid of something but they cannot articulate the reason why. They always fret and are unable to control their worries. There are constant muscle tension and fear reactions thus developing heart palpitations, dizziness, headaches and insomnia. These physical problems are combined with anxiety that makes it difficult for them to deal with normal everyday activities.

1. Panic Disorder

A person suffering from panic disorder has brief attacks that are so intense they tremble and shake. Afterwards, they feel dizzy and have difficulty breathing. A panic attack usually lasts for 10 minutes or maybe even less.

These attacks can happen anywhere anytime. More often than not, they take place after a scary experience or the person is stressed out.

Sometimes this can take place when the person is exercising. People who have panic attacks believe they are having a heart attack and they are rushed to the doctor or to the emergency room.

There are changes in heartbeat and the sufferer would think that something is wrong with this heart or he is about to have another attack. Some are so worried about their illness that they quit their jobs and refuse to leave their homes to avoid embarrassment just in case another attack occurs. Panic disorder can be diagnosed when these attacks ultimately lead to a persistent one.

2. Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

The best movie example of a person suffering from this anxiety disorder is Jack Nicholson in "As Good As It Gets." People with OCD are persistent and obsessed with their rituals in order to control the anxieties that are produced by their thoughts. In the end, these rituals control their over-all behavior.

You notice how Jack Nicholson had to switch the light on and off over and over again, just as he has to lock and relock the doors before going to bed? Performing these rituals provide them with some sort of pleasure because it relieves them from a social anxiety.

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder affects 2.2 million Americans and this can also be accompanied by eating disorders or depression. It strikes both men and women and the symptoms are prevalent in childhood, adolescence and even in early adulthood. It also runs in families.

3. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

This anxiety disorder often develops after a frightening ordeal that involves physical harm or threats. A person who has developed PTSD may be someone who was harmed or has a loved one harmed. He may also be a witness to a harmful event.

PTSD was brought to public attention with war veterans. However, it can also result from traumatic incidents like rape, torture, kidnapping, mugging, car accidents, plane crashes, train wrecks, bombings or natural disasters like earthquakes or floods.

People diagnosed with PTSD are easily startled and emotionally numb. They lose interest in their hobbies and have trouble being affectionate. They are also irritable, aggressive and violent. They avoid the situations that remind them of the traumatizing incident. Anniversaries of the incident are also very difficult to handle.

PTSD affects around 7.7 million Americans and it can occur at any age, even childhood. Women are more likely to have PTSD than men. This disorder runs in families and is accompanied by depression or substance abuse.

4. Social Phobia

This is also known as social anxiety disorder. People who are overwhelmingly anxious or excessively self-conscious are diagnosed with social phobia. They are intense, persistent and are afraid of being watched or judged by others. They are easily embarrassed. They are anxious for days or weeks before a situation they dread.

This fear is so severe that it can interfere with school, work or other everyday activities. Therefore, it is hard for them to make and even keep friends.

People with social phobia recognize their fear of being around people and they know that it is unreasonable but it is difficult for them to overcome this. Even if they do manage to confront what they are afraid of, they are anxious in doing so and are quite uncomfortable.

Social phobia affects 15 million Americans. Women and men are likely to develop this and the symptoms show in childhood or early adolescence. It runs in the family and is often accompanied by depression or substance abuse if people self-medicate their worries.

5. Specific Phobia

This is the strong and irrational fear of a situation or an object. The person recognizes the irrationality of the fear but the anxiety still remains. It is different from panic disorder and generalized anxiety disorder because there is a specific situation or stimulus that triggers the fear response.

People with phobias have quite an imagination so they anticipate what they fear with terrifying consequences. They recognize their fear but they are also unable to control it.

6. Generalized Anxiety Disorder

People suffering from generalized anxiety disorder go through daily activities filled with tension and worry even when there is nothing to trigger it. They wait for disaster to happen and are always concerned about money, health issues, family problems and work when there really is nothing to worry about.

A person is diagnosed with GAD if his worries have prevented him from functioning properly for at least 6 months. He cannot seem to get rid of these anxieties even if he recognizes it. They cannot relax and are startled easily. They also have difficulty in concentrating, falling asleep and staying asleep.

GAD affects 6.8 million Americans and two times more women than men. This can begin at any life cycle but there is greater risk between childhood and middle age. It is accompanied with depression and substance abuse.

We will explore each disorder in depth in the upcoming chapters.

What Are the [Symptoms of Panic Disorder](#)

Everything You Need to Know About Panic Disorder

What is Panic Disorder?

Panic disorder is an anxiety disorder that can be treated successfully. It is characterized by attacks of fear and terror that are usually accompanied by sweatiness, pounding heart, faintness, dizziness and weakness. During these attacks, the people with panic disorder feel flushed or chilled and their hands tingle and feel numb. They may also experience chest pains and nausea. These attacks usually produce a sense of unreality and fear of losing control and impending doom.

People with panic disorder are usually fearful of the physical symptoms mentioned above. That is already a sign of people having panic attacks. Sometimes, they think they are losing their minds, having heart attacks or about to die. They cannot predict where or when their attacks will occur so these in-between episodes are full of worries and anxieties. Some of them dread the embarrassment from the next attack that they quit their jobs and opt to stay at home instead.

Panic attacks can take place even when asleep. An attack usually lasts 10 minutes or maybe less but there are some signs that an attack can last longer. These panic disorders affect 6 million American adults. It is more common in women than men. The symptoms show in late adolescence or in early adulthood but not all who experiences a panic attack eventually develop panic disorder.

Those who have redundant and full-blown attacks are disabled by their condition. Therefore they should seek treatment before they isolate themselves from society. There are some cases wherein the attacks can lead to trauma. For example, say an attack took place in an elevator. Soon enough, the person may become afraid of getting into elevators.

Panic attacks can restrict the lives of people suffering from this disorder. It also makes them avoid normal daily activities like driving or grocery shopping. About 1/3 of people with panic disorder stay at home and are not able to confront their fears unless they are with their spouse or someone they trust.

Panic disorders are accompanied by other anxiety disorders, or depression. It can also be associated with substance or alcohol abuse.

These conditions must be treated separately because the person will not be able to heal from his panic disorder if he is still induced in alcohol or drugs.

What are the causes of Panic Disorder?

Panic disorder is said to run in families. This means that it runs in the genes. But there are also cases where people who do not have history of the disorder still develop it.

The other biological factors are stressful life occurrences, surroundings and state of mind that is exaggerated. These all play a part in triggering panic disorder. Usually, the first attack is due to physical illness. Then the attacks that follow after that are due to stress or side effects to a certain kind of medication. Those who tend to take on too many responsibilities may also suffer attacks.

Studies that have been conducted on animals and humans show results that there are specific brain areas involved in panic disorder. Fear is the emotion that evolves whenever there is danger. There is a stimuli in the brain that causes a fast and protected response whenever this emotion arises.

The body's fear response is coordinated by the amygdale. This is a small structure that is located inside the brain. Eating disorders are also linked to have rooted from panic attacks as well. Other mood disorders can also lead to panic disorders. These are the clinical depression and bipolar personality disorder.

Panic attacks are caused by stimulants. Examples of stimulants are caffeine and nicotine. These can already induce the attacks in people suffering from panic disorder. Chemicals like carbon monoxide can also trigger the attacks. The response varies from person to person.

How do you [treat Panic Disorder](#) ?

Panic disorder can be disabling but it can also be regulated. Because of the troubling symptoms, these are more often than not mistaken as mental instability. This misconception prevents people who suffer the disease to go see their physicians.

The treatment for panic disorder is medication. There is also a kind of psychotherapy termed as cognitive-behavioral therapy that greatly assists those who have the disorder. The person must go to a mental

health professional (psychiatrists, professional counselors, social workers and psychologists) he trusts for better results.

What Are the Symptoms of Social Anxiety Disorder

Everything You Need To Know About Social Anxiety Disorder

Social anxiety disorder manifests as apprehension, fear or worry at a heightened level. This is confirmed if the person is easily embarrassed and is often anxious of practically every situation.

Anxiety, fear and worry when speaking in public is normal but if this reaction is heightened, like fearing the day days or weeks in advance, then that is a different case. The experience of social anxiety disorder is often described as an exaggerated reaction on situations that usually wouldn't entail that much fear.

Social anxiety disorder is also referred to as social phobia. It refers to long-lasting anxiety that is triggered by extreme stress and the inability to function well in normal daily activities. Others, thus resulting in more fear for the individual, often scrutinize these anxieties. About 13.3% of

the general American population suffer or has suffered from social anxiety disorder at a given point in their lives.

What are the symptoms of Social Anxiety Disorder?

Blushing, sweating, nausea, trembling and stammering are the common signs that the person is having a panic attack due to discomfort or intense fear. Whenever there are signs, it is better that the person gets an early diagnosis. In that case, the symptoms are minimized and additional problems like depression are prevented.

There are also cases wherein people suffering from Social Anxiety Disorder turn to drugs or alcohol in order to lessen what they are afraid of.

Social phobics experience dread that is presented by others. They are overly conscious and they place too much attention on themselves when it comes to any activity. They put the pressure on themselves. They also have the tendency to be too negative.

As for their fear, it is always persistent in one or more situations. He is so afraid to be scrutinized by others that he is afraid to do anything at

all. These feared activities include most kinds of social interactions like dating, parties, going to restaurants and talking to strangers.

Physiological effects are also normal to people suffering from anxiety disorder. They are often faced with uncomfortable situations. For children, they often throw tantrums, cry or cling to their parents; while in adults, this is shown by sweating, shaking, nausea and palpitations.

A 2006 study shows that the brain has amygdale. As mentioned previously, this is a small yet complicated structure that is part of the limbic system. It is so hyperactive that it is responsible for the emotions of an individual. One of these emotions is fear.

How to treat Social Anxiety Disorder?

A person suffering from the disorder may be treated with medication and/or psychotherapy. Recent studies show that the cognitive behavior therapy, whether done on an individual or in groups, are highly effective in providing the remedy for social phobia. The behavioral and cognitive components search for thinking patterns that affect the physical reactions of the individual therefore affecting his whole behavior.

The medication prescribed to the patient often consists of antidepressants. Social anxiety disorders have increased since 1999. Therefore the marketing of drugs to cure it has also increased.

Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors or SSRIs are a class of antidepressants that are said to be the first choice of professionals in treating social anxiety disorder. These drugs lift the level of serotonin. This is also the first drug that has been formally approved by the FDA or the Food and Drug Administration. There is less risk with this medication. It has also not been subjected to any controversy.

There may be side effects as the body adjusts to the medication. Symptoms such as insomnia, headaches and nausea are normal. There are also changes in sexual behavior. It is not yet sure whether the medication is safe for pregnant women though.

Another remedy for social anxiety disorder is psychotherapy and as we discussed previously it has been proven to be effective to the treatment of panic disorder as well.

It has two main components. The cognitive component assists in making people aware of how they can change thinking patterns to overcome their fears.

The other is gradual exposure where the person is exposed to the anxiety-provoking situations that he is afraid of. Throughout the whole procedure, he eventually learns how to handle his anxieties and worries. This is also termed as anxiety management training.

What Are the Symptoms of Generalized [Anxiety Disorder](#)

Everything You Need To Know About Generalized Anxiety Disorder

General anxiety disorder is characterized by uncontrollable worry and excessive stress about daily concerns. The frequency, duration and intensity of the anxiety are somehow not proportionate and are regarded as abnormal. This results to interruption in normally performing daily activities.

General anxiety disorder greatly affects 5% of the total American population. It is more prevalent in women than men and in the young than the old. People who have general anxiety disorder have symptoms

like tension, restlessness, hyperactivity, fear, rumination, worrying and inconsistency.

If this is prevalent for at least six months then we strongly recommend that the person go to his physician as soon as possible.

Those who have general anxiety disorders often worry about things like their finances, health, job and their family when there is no point to do so in the first place. Those with GAD worry over minor matters like deadlines, appointments, cleaning the house and keeping the workplace organized.

30% of General Anxiety Disorder is inherited but there are traits that make people become more liable to getting it. People who are naturally nervous, depressed or unable to tolerate frustration are more likely to show symptoms of General Anxiety Disorder.

People with GAD also have more tendencies to come in conflicts with other people. They are also very hard on themselves and they choose to evade situations that result to fear, worry or anxiety.

General anxiety disorder results in lower levels of support from society as well as underachievement in the academia. It can also result in substance abuse and acquiring other psychological problems.

The following are signs that the person must be treated as soon as possible

- Excessive anxiousness and worry that occurs for more than six months causing interruptions in daily activities such as school or work performance.
- He is restless, always on the edge or keyed up
- Sleeping hours are often interrupted and has a hard time falling asleep again

How do you [treat someone with GAD](#) ?

Treatments for general anxiety disorder are medications and cognitive behavioral therapy. When the two are combined, symptoms are alleviated. Medication alone can already reduce the anxiety of the patient. However, it will not be able to entirely eliminate the disorder.

Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors or SSRIs are a class of antidepressants that are said to be the first choice of professionals in

treating social anxiety disorder. These drugs lift the level of serotonin. This is also the first drug that has been formally approved by the FDA or the Food and Drug Administration. There is less risk with this medication. It has also not been subjected to any controversy.

There may be side effects as the body adjusts to the medication. Symptoms such as insomnia, headaches and nausea are normal. There are also changes in sexual behavior. It is not yet sure whether the medication is safe for pregnant women though.

Anti-depressants such as SNRIs and SSRIs are commonly used in order to remedy GAD. Luvox, Faverin, Zoloft, Seroxat, Paxil, Celexa, Cipralex, Lexapro are examples of SSRI while Efexor, Lyrica are examples of SNRI.

Pregabalin or Lyrica is used as well. Diazepam and alprazolam, or forms of benzodiazepenes, are also used in order to treat the ailment in short-term but they are not recommended because continuous use of this often result to dependency on the drug.

Basically, anti-depressants are said to be the most effective treatment because depression and anxiety are linked to the serotonin. That is why

a lot of people who are depressed expressed these symptoms and turn to these remedies.

Another remedy for general anxiety disorder is psychotherapy. It has been proven to be effective to the treatment of panic disorder as well. It has two main components. The cognitive component assists in making people aware of how they can change thinking patterns to overcome their fears.

Since medication is implemented over cognitive behavioral therapy, the medical community often has consternation regarding the matter. Though pharmacological treatments have deemed to be successful in treating the disorder, cognitive behavioral therapy has also shown to be effective and efficient just as well – with less side effects and risk involved.

What Are the Symptoms of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

Everything You Need To Know About Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

Obsessive-compulsive disorder is characterized as a person's obsession with rituals in order to neutralize intrusive thoughts. This is a major anxiety disorder.

There are recurrent and constant impulses, thoughts or images that the person experiences at any given time. The person tries to suppress or ignore these thoughts, images or impulses through another action or thought. Sometimes the person recognizes his thoughts and regards them as obsession but he is not able to remedy it himself. There is also the tendency to exaggerate small details.

Oftentimes, this disorder is defined as the repetitive mental acts or behavior that the person feels he should perform in order to respond to his obsession. It is as if there are rules and he can never break the rules. These mental acts and behavior are often aimed in reducing distress of the individual. When he does not do the action, the more stressed he would be.

What are the symptoms of OCD?

Obsessive-compulsive disorder is manifested in so many forms. If you remember the 1997 movie "As Good As It Gets", Jack Nicholson is an

example of a person suffering from OCD. Another recent one is Leonardo DiCaprio in "The Aviator."

The symptoms are constantly hand washing, specific counting technique (like counting in fives, grouping objects in threes). There's also counting the steps from destination A to destination B. They also tend to align objects in right angles.

People with OCD also cancel their bad thoughts and replace them with good thoughts. When they imagine that they are harming a child, they replace it with the child playing happily so that the previous thought can be canceled out.

There are also sexual obsessions. There are some cases when the person does not want these sexual thoughts. Two examples are the fear of being homosexual or a pedophile. In these cases, the sufferers obsess whether they are or are not aroused by people of the same sex or children.

There is also the fear of contamination. You remember how Jack Nicholson would always bring his own plastic utensils to the restaurant. There's also the scene with Leonardo DiCaprio giving a queasy look

after Cate Blanchett drinks from the same bottle of milk as he is drinking. They fear the human body secretions like sweat; saliva, tears or mucus can cause them harm.

There is also the need for the body to always be balance. Jack Nicholson evades cracks on the floor just as Leonardo DiCaprio is seen walking with a cane. (To remind the readers, the Nicholson here pertains to his character in "As Good As It Gets" and the Dicaprio in "The Aviator." They both played personages with OCD.)

People with OCD know that these behavior and thoughts are irrational but they are still compelled to do what they have already been used to in the first place. If not, there will always be feelings of dread or panic.

It is important to note though that people with OCD have different behaviors than those people who have gambling problems or are over-eaters. People with OCD typically do not experience pleasure from their rituals as opposed to the previously mentioned.

[How do you treat OCD ?](#)

Interestingly enough, there is no cure for obsessive-compulsive disorder. However, anti-depressants can lessen the panic, anxiety and worry that it may eventually trigger when a particular ritual has not been done.

Medications include SSRIs like paroxetine, sertraline, fluoxetine and fluvoxamine. There are also the tricyclic antidepressants, specifically clomipramine. SSRIs prevent the serotonin from being pumped right back into its original neuron that usually triggers the panic button to the brain. In that way, the person is eased off his obsessive-compulsive thoughts and excessive anxiety.

It may also be treated with behavioral therapy or cognitive therapy. There are cases that these two therapies are combined with medications. Psychotherapy helps in treating the disorder by exposing the person to a specific technique known as the Exposure and Ritual Prevention or ERP. This gradually makes the person learn how to tolerate his anxiety that is connected to his inability to perform a ritual that he has been used to doing.

What are the Symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Know the Symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Post-traumatic stress disorder is the result of extreme mental stress that a person experiences due to a major trauma. Trauma may be caused by certain events, including assault, abuse, war, injury, imprisonment, threats, life-changing events and natural disasters. As a result, certain symptoms of the disorder manifest in a patient.

Post-traumatic stress disorder was only accepted as a psychiatric illness about twenty years ago, but it was a disorder that has been recognized and diagnosed at least a hundred years before that. Over time, it has been called different names. It was a psychologist named Pierre Janet, a contemporary of Sigmund Freud, who was able to describe the group of symptoms or syndrome of post-traumatic stress disorder.

During the First World War, post-traumatic stress disorder was referred to as 'shell shock'. It was called 'combat fatigue' during World War II. After Vietnam, it was referred to as 'Post Vietnam Syndrome'.

What are the general symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder?

While post-traumatic stress disorder has a group of symptoms, there are certain common physical manifestations of the disorder. This includes sweating, paleness, heart palpitation, excitability, agitation, headache, dizziness and fainting.

The group of symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder may be classified into three groups: reliving of the event, avoidance and increased arousal. A person who suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder may exhibit symptoms of re-experiencing the stressful event either as flashbacks or nightmares. Memories may also be triggered by outside cues or internal thoughts. It is also possible that he might have identical reactions to what he experienced when the actual event occurred.

The second group of symptoms is avoidance. This is where denial of the event is maintained by the person who suffers from the disorder. Avoidance may be in the form of a lack of remembrance of the trauma or certain aspects of the event, detachment, evasion of people, objects or places that remind of the event and a lack of concern for day-to-day normal activities.

Avoidance may also be exhibited through the lack of emotional responsiveness and is easily the most difficult group of symptoms for psychiatrists to treat. In its extreme form, it may even result to dissociation, including Dissociative Identity Disorder. This is also referred to as Multiple Personality Disorder.

Increased arousal may be another way a person exhibits the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. He may show irritability, sudden bursts of anger, hypervigilance, extreme response to surprise or shock, difficulty in concentrating and sleeping.

When two or more people experience trauma, do they have the same symptoms?

A group of people who suffer from trauma and experience post-traumatic stress disorder do not necessarily develop the same group of symptoms. In fact, some people do not even develop the disorder itself or if they do, it may appear in a mild form. The appearance of symptoms is also not predictable. Some people may develop it immediately after the traumatic event and some months or years later.

After treatment, some people may also have more difficulty in going back to their regular or normal state while others recover easily. Occasional flare-ups of symptoms may also occur.

What are the treatments for post-traumatic stress disorder?

Depending on the symptoms, post-traumatic stress disorder may be treated using one or a combination of the following:

Psychotherapy

This type of treatment aims to induce relaxation through meditation, controlled breathing, positive imagery, neurofeedback, and so on.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Unlike some of the techniques used in psychotherapy, CBT actively explores the traumatic event in order to recognize, manage and prevent trigger episodes. It may also include a technique called desensitization, which involves the managed re-introduction or re-living of the traumatic event. This is to help the patient get used to the idea that the event is not as threatening or that his own responses to it can be controlled.

Medication

A patient is treated with anti-depressants or anti-anxiety medications that help to calm and stabilize his mood. These include SSRIs or selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, paroxetine and sertraline. If symptoms of manic depression occur, divalproex sodium or lithium may be prescribed. If one of the problems is sleeplessness, medications such as nefazodone and trazodone may also be recommended. To reinforce treatment, medications are often used in combination with other forms of therapy.

Somatic psychotherapy

This is a combination of cognitive, motor, sensory and emotional treatments that may include rhythmic stimulation in the form of touch or sound. The purpose of this treatment is to stimulate both sides of the brain and integrate their functions, thereby restoring normalcy in responses to stress.

How long does treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder last?

Generally, people suffering from chronic post-traumatic stress disorder need to be treated for at least 6 months, after which they may be recommended to undergo booster sessions. Patients with acute forms of the disorder can expect continuing medication that may be tapered at 6 to 12 months, depending on the patient's response.

If the response is good, medication may be tapered beginning at one year up to 2 years. If there are residual symptoms in the chronic form of the disorder, treatment may last for about 2 years or even more. Patients can expect some positive results in 3 months from their initial treatment, as long as they do not develop other illnesses or disorders that may have stemmed from their experience of the trauma.

About Agoraphobia

Agoraphobia: What It Is and What You Can Do About It

Agoraphobia, translated roughly from Greek, literally means 'fear of the marketplace.' In the past, it was believed to be the debilitating fear of open spaces and public places. As more studies and research have shown, it is now thought as a result of continued episodes of panic attacks.

Agoraphobia often results when a person becomes extremely fearful of being trapped in a place or situation from which he cannot escape. He might also believe that escaping from that situation may prove to be difficult or that he may not be able to find help.

As a result, a person with agoraphobia begins to shun public places where there are too many people. He might also find it too constricting to ride buses, airplanes, cars and trains. In its severe form, agoraphobia may also keep a person from stepping out of his home, the only place where he feels safest.

Agoraphobia and panic disorder

Agoraphobia is the result of a panic disorder that has remained untreated, ignored or misdiagnosed. A panic disorder is the result of continued episodes of panic attacks, where a person suffers from intense discomfort and feelings of extreme fear.

Panic attacks can also occur without a warning and affects about one-third of the adult population annually. It may either occur in isolation or as a result of another disorder such as depression, anxiety

or social phobia. Unlike anxiety, panic attacks can only last for a short while, usually 20-30 minutes.

Agoraphobia does not occur by itself. It usually makes its first appearance within 12 months of the recurrence of several episodes of panic attacks. In fact, one out of three people who suffer from panic disorder have a high possibility of developing agoraphobia.

Agoraphobia, like panic disorder, is usually a chronic condition.

Symptoms of agoraphobia

Agoraphobia sufferers experience several symptoms all at once, including heart palpitations or increased heart rate, shortness of breath, numbness, dizziness, chest pain, trembling, sweating, extreme hot or cold, feelings of losing control, going crazy or dying.

While some episodes of agoraphobia can occur without warning, being in certain situations can trigger an attack. People who suffer from agoraphobia are actually afraid they might have a panic attack. If they are stuck in a situation where escape or help may prove difficult or awkward such as parties, crowded shopping malls or subways, they become more agitated and their feeling of panic swells.

To avoid the feeling of being 'trapped', people with agoraphobia stay away from public places. This is not because they are afraid of public places per se, but because they do not want to suffer from a panic attack while in those locations. To feel safe, they instead keep to familiar places, such as their homes or insist in having the constant company of a trusted person.

Treatments for Agoraphobia

The most common treatments for agoraphobia are Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) or medication. A combination of both may also be used in certain cases. CBT is a type of psychotherapy that is also used to treat other mental disorders. As a treatment, CBT involves altering a patient's thinking patterns so he can manage and handle his fears.

Patients are taught to understand what agoraphobia is and to accept that the feelings of panic are normal, albeit amplified. Certain patterns of automatic thinking and behavior during an episode of agoraphobia may also be altered to help the patient cope should one occur.

To help patients handle their reactions, they are also taught to control their breathing as part of coping skills. CBT also involves exposing a patient to situations or incidents that usually trigger agoraphobia. CBT as a treatment is quite successful, helping about 85% of panic attack patients recover after only about 10 sessions.

Medication usually involves either anti-depressants or anti-anxiety drugs. Anti-depressants serve to reduce or totally prevent episodes of [panic attacks](#) , although they usually begin to take effect only after several weeks. Anti-anxiety drugs, on the other hand, are fast acting and can produce a calming effect in less than an hour.

Therapies used for Agoraphobia

Other forms of treatments and therapies to address and eliminate agoraphobia include family therapy, group therapy using CBT and relaxation techniques using meditation. Depending on the severity of the patient's mental condition, a combination of several treatments may be used to produce the desired effect.

Conquer Claustrophobia

Claustrophobia, Its Symptoms and Treatments

Claustrophobia is a form of anxiety disorder where a person exhibits an extreme and unreasonable fear of small or enclosed spaces. During an attack, both physical and emotional reactions may be experienced.

Claustrophobia is usually characterized by feelings of being trapped and having no means to find an exit or a way out of a location.

About one in 63 Americans has suffered some form of claustrophobia in his life while others have the disorder as a chronic condition. It is not clear what causes claustrophobia, but people who suffer from it find that it runs in their family. The first experience of claustrophobia usually occurs in early childhood or adolescence and develops from there. It usually disappears when a person reaches adulthood.

Claustrophobia is a disorder that can be overcome. If not, it can be effectively managed. If left untreated, it can limit normal day-to-day, social, professional and personal activities.

Who are most at risk of developing claustrophobia?

As a form of [anxiety attack](#) , claustrophobia is usually the result of repeated episodes of anxiety when a person is within an enclosed space or locked room. If he is not able to manage his fears effectively and choose to avoid similar situations, there is a great chance he will experience another attack with more severity. If he has a family member who suffers from claustrophobia, he may also have the potential to develop the disorder.

What are the symptoms of claustrophobia?

The symptoms usually mimic those that people with anxiety disorder suffer from: trembling, hyperventilation, sweating, dizziness, fainting and feelings of panic and terror. When in an enclosed room or space, people with claustrophobia compulsively try to escape, look for an exit or begin to feel fear once the door is closed. They may also consciously try to avoid riding elevators, planes, trains and closed cars. In its mild form, claustrophobia may also compel a person to keep to exits or doors when in a crowd.

How is claustrophobia treated?

Depending on the severity of the disorder, one or a combination of treatments may be used to either manage or eliminate claustrophobia. Probably the most common treatment used is psychotherapy, which involves counseling to help a person overcome his fear of enclosed spaces and handle situations that trigger a claustrophobic attack.

Another common way to deal with claustrophobia is by using Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, also a treatment used to manage other types of anxiety disorders. CBT involves teaching a person to control his thinking process when exposed to situations that induce fear and panic.

By controlling his thoughts, a person suffering from claustrophobia learns to change his reaction from fear to calmness.

Often, CBT exposes a person to an actual 'trigger' situation to help him get used to the feeling and practice managing his reactions. This is called 'flooding' and the exposure lasts until the person is able to manage his phobia and the feeling of panic passes. Once he realizes that nothing actually harmful happened to him, he will feel more confident the next time the same situation occurs.

While the exposure may be controlled (the person who has claustrophobia either has someone with him in the room or has

someone guiding him as he tries to handle himself within the room), the situation is real to the person and he can apply the coping techniques taught to him to prevent him from giving in to extreme reactions.

Another form of psychotherapy is counter-conditioning which is used when a claustrophobic person cannot handle flooding. He is still exposed to trigger situations, only this time, the exposure is done gradually and he copes with his feelings by using visualization and relaxation techniques.

If neither flooding nor counter-conditioning is effective, a technique called modeling may be used. Another person or 'model' is assigned to confront a trigger situation without exhibiting fear and a claustrophobic person is encouraged to emulate the same behavior.

Another form of treatment is with the use of medication, using drugs to treat depression or anxiety. These drugs will not cure claustrophobia, but they help the person regulate physical symptoms associated with the disorder. These types of drugs, for example, can help bring back an increased heart rate to normal or prevent sweating and agitation by

helping the body to relax. This form of treatment is most effective if used in combination with psychotherapy.

Your Child and Anxiety Disorders

What You Should Know About [Anxiety Disorders](#) in Children

Children and adolescents experience anxiety disorders just like any adult. In children, this disorder is usually the result of life-changing experiences and stressful events, such as moving to a new city, the loss of a loved one or it can be triggered by a simple incident like going to a new school. If anxiety disorder is ignored, it could affect a child's self-esteem and change his relationship with his peers significantly. It can also cause adjustment problems, an inability to handle schoolwork and can even lead to drug and alcohol use. There is also a huge chance a child may continue experiencing anxiety disorder well into adulthood.

When it's time to seek professional help

Certain behaviors in children may not constitute an anxiety disorder and symptoms associated with it usually disappear after a while.

However, if a child or teen continues to develop or exhibit certain behaviors, it may be time to ask for treatment. These behaviors include: mood swings, loss of appetite, difficulty in sleeping, aggressive behavior, difficulty in language and speech development, decline in school and activity performances and regression.

As we discussed, there are different types of anxiety disorders, each one with different symptoms. Let's review them in context with children. These include:

Generalized Anxiety Disorder or GAD

Separation Anxiety Disorder

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Panic Disorder

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

Phobias

Generalized Anxiety Disorder usually occurs in middle childhood and during the adolescent period. This is characterized by extreme worries about normal day-to-day activities that border on the unrealistic.

Children and adolescents suffering from GAD are also often tense and self-conscious, always asking for reassurance from parents and peers.

Some physical manifestations can also occur, including headaches, stomachaches and the like.

A child who has Separation Anxiety Disorder often finds it extremely difficult to leave the company of his parents. This clingy behavior is also accompanied by insomnia, withdrawal, bouts of sadness and depression. This is a fairly common disorder and about 4% of children at one time or another experiences this.

Children and adolescents who experience a traumatic event, such as violence, physical abuse, sexual abuse, assault or a disaster, exhibit post-traumatic stress disorder. Children often develop troublesome flashback episodes and nightmares and over-react when surprised.

[Panic Disorder](#) occurs when children and teens experience bouts of panic attacks, seemingly without cause. Physical manifestations include sweating, increased heart rate, nausea or a feeling of dread.

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder or OCD is characterized by repetitive patterns of thought or behavior, which appear not to have any sense. While very distressing to the child, he will find it difficult to control himself. This repeated behavior includes frequent washing of the

hands, arranging objects, keeping specific linear arrangements of everyday things or compulsive counting.

Some fears in childhood are quite normal, such as fear of the dark or of imaginary creatures. But if a fear becomes excessive and unrealistic, it becomes a phobia. It can manifest in different ways and usually focuses on one subject such as heights, animals, water, enclosed spaces, etc.

Who usually develops anxiety disorder?

Research has shown that proneness to anxiety disorder is usually the result of basic temperament. Extremely shy, restrained or uncommunicative children are at a risk in developing the disorder. However, these patterns of behavior are not accurate indications of anxiety disorder because children change temperaments as they grow older and many of their childhood fears and worries disappear or take on a mild form in later years.

There is also a tendency for children and adolescents to develop an anxiety disorder if one of their parents has it. However, there is no

proof as to whether anxiety disorder is genetically passed on or whether the environment or a combination of both factors causes it.

Most researchers suggest that parents should watch out for signs of anxiety disorder in children ages 6 to 8. This is usually the time when children's priorities and life experiences begin to change as they start to extend their social life through school and peer relationships.

Treating anxiety disorder in children

Treatment is a process that both parents and child should be actively involved in. Parents are advised to seek only the help of a professional.

Some treatment courses may involve CBT or Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, family therapy, relaxation techniques, biofeedback and medication.

One or a combination of two may be prescribed to help the child overcome his anxiety disorder and it may or may not include medication. Some drugs that are commonly prescribed are SSRIs or selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, fluoxetine, paroxetine, sertraline, citalopram, and fluvoxamine. Some anti-depressants such as imipramine and lorazepam are not as commonly used.

When medications are prescribed, parents should discuss with the doctor the possible benefits and risks. For example, in 2004, the FDA warned that some medications like SSRIs and other anti-depressants increased suicidal behaviors in a few young subjects. Although the study was short-term, it involved more than 4,000 children and 9 different anti-depressant medications. Parents should find out what exactly they can expect from the medications and other forms of treatment and if there are other courses of action they may choose to take.

[Anxiety disorder](#) affects millions of children and adolescents worldwide but it is a disorder that can be treated. The successful treatment of anxiety disorder rests on the treatment/s of choice, the extent of the child's disorder and the parents' participation in the treatment.

Treatment involving medication may be continued on a regular basis for about one year, after which the child will be reassessed and the variety, type and dosage may be adjusted. It is very unlikely for a child to continue medication for the rest of his life. In fact, he may only undergo one medication course and will only need further treatment if symptoms of anxiety disorder persist. Otherwise, the doctor will only

make follow-up assessments until the child's disorder is managed or totally eliminated.

Anxiety Disorder Research

Current Anxiety Disorder Research: What's Being Done and Why They Should Matter

Anxiety disorder is a mental illness on which a lot of research and studies are still being performed to fully understand how it works and how to treat it. We have grown by leaps and bounds since anxiety disorder was first observed and recorded hundreds of years ago and yet, we are still probably at the tip of the iceberg in terms of fully understanding what goes on in the brains of people who suffer from this illness. Here are some of the most recent studies and researches being done for the treatment of anxiety disorder:

What are the recent studies or findings regarding medications used for anxiety disorder?

Generally, anxiety disorder is treated with medication, psychotherapy (behavioral or cognitive) or a combination of both. Some researchers

are performing a clinical trial that tries to examine how effective these treatments are when used either separately or together against obsessive-compulsive behavior, one of the common forms of anxiety disorder. Researchers also hope to determine how to reduce the relapse rate that rises when drug therapy is stopped.

On medications, a new drug called buspirone has shown promise as an anti-anxiety medication. However, research is still ongoing on whether it will perform better if used with anti-depressant drugs that have an effect on serotonin.

How do hormones affect [anxiety disorders](#) ?

To a certain degree, some hormones seem to affect certain forms of anxiety disorder, such as post-traumatic stress disorder or PTSD. People diagnosed with the illness have shown to have low levels of cortisol, a stress hormone. On the other hand, they have extremely high levels of norepinephrine, epinephrine.

Researchers believe the levels of these hormones in the body causes a person to feel anxiety even after some period of time has passed since the occurrence of the stressful event. High levels of CRF or

corticotropin releasing factor might also be the reason why it is so easy to startle people with PTSD. Researchers hope to find ways to regulate the imbalances in the hormones and manage symptoms.

What about brain imaging technology?

Brain imaging technology along with techniques using neurochemical tests, have been used to treat anxiety disorder. NIMH (National Institute of Mental Health) has used the same technology to be able to observe a living brain and note changes in its parts such as the cortex and the amygdala. Through controlled observation, scientists will be able to determine whether activity in the brain is abnormal and how certain areas are affected by therapies or medication.

Brain imaging technology has figured significantly recently. Recent studies conducted on the brains of people with obsessive-compulsive behavior using magnetic resonance showed that their brains contained considerably less white matter than normal subjects. This indicates that the abnormality in the brains of OCD patients is more widely distributed than it was earlier believed.

Is it possible to predict or prevent the occurrence of mental illness?

Part of research conducted in the field of psychiatry involves prevention efforts. This focuses on trying to understand how mental illnesses such as anxiety disorders develop and how they can be prevented at certain points.

By knowing how mental illnesses begin, researchers hope to be able to perform interventions at significant points during the course of the disorder. They also hope to use the newest advances in research performed in the fields of biomedicine, cognitive and behavioral sciences to aid in their efforts for prevention.

Is there a possible genetic pre-disposition for anxiety disorder?

A 2001 study made by the American Journal of Psychiatry seems to show that anxiety disorder in the form of depression and panic disorder run in families. Children whose parents have been diagnosed or are suffering from anxiety disorder are more likely to develop the disorder themselves.

The study also shows that children may be exposed to specific disorders that produce specific risks. For example, parents who suffer from a panic disorder may increase the risk of their children developing not

only [panic disorder](#) but also agoraphobia. Parents who suffer from depression increase the risk of their children developing social anxiety disorder, disruptive behavior and depression.

While the study shows that children in households where parents have some form of anxiety disorder are at risk, it doesn't prove whether they are genetically pre-disposed to the illness itself.

However, the study of whether anxiety disorder and other mental illnesses are affected by genetics does not end there. A project called the Human Genetics Initiative hopes to be able to find the genes responsible for mental illnesses by compiling a registry of all families with a history of bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and other mental illnesses. By finding a common gene, they may be able to find out whether mental illness can be passed on genetically or not.

How does this study affect treatment?

This study reiterates the importance of early diagnosis and treatment of anxiety disorder. People in the initial stages of an anxiety disorder must be treated before the illness becomes chronic. By then, there is a possibility that it will be too advanced to respond to treatments.

Through this study, researchers and psychiatrists hope to be able to

develop newer methods and techniques to prevent anxiety disorders in children before they even begin.

How to Know if You Have an [Anxiety Disorder](#)

Find Out If You Have Anxiety Disorder

Anxiety disorder can take on many forms and can extend beyond social boundaries. It is a disorder that has been recognized for hundreds of years and is now considered and treated as a psychiatric illness. Milder forms of anxiety disorder affect about 25% of Americans. They are those who exhibit a less severe form such as fear of snakes, dogs and insects. However, there is also about 25% of the population who have to undergo or are currently undergoing treatment as a result of their anxiety disorder.

What is anxiety disorder?

An anxiety disorder is any of a group of psychological health problems that affect how people behave in certain situations and alters how they perceive things. It can manifest itself in different forms such as social phobia, panic disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder,

obsessive-compulsive disorder and generalized anxiety disorder. If a person does not seek treatment, the symptoms can result in depression.

I feel fearful and anxious sometimes. Does this mean I have anxiety disorder?

Not all feelings of anxiety can be considered as a mental disorder. It's quite normal for people to feel anxious or scared sometimes and these are actually good signs of your mind's natural ability to cope with certain situations.

Feeling anxious or fearful is part of every normal human being's 'fight-or-flight' reaction especially when faced with threat, danger or unknown situations. This is the normal reaction you'll feel during emergencies like fire, earthquakes, physical or emotional threats, disasters or other stressful events.

You should only consider feelings of anxiety as a possible disorder if there is no logical reason for their occurrence. You should also be concerned once they become irrational, excessive and ongoing.

Feelings of anxiety can constitute a disorder if they also interfere with a person's behavior and normal functioning.

What are the signs that I may have [anxiety disorder](#) ?

Only a professional can diagnose whether or not you have anxiety disorder. Even before that, he should rule out any other physiological or medical causes that may have caused certain symptoms to occur. Other than those mentioned above, certain physical and mental reactions can constitute anxiety disorder including at least four of the following:

Extreme and prolonged bouts of panic attacks

Fear of a panic attack

Avoidance behavior

Trembling

Increased heart rate

Hyperventilation or shortness of breath

Nausea

Sweating

Fainting

Choking

Let's review. Other than these physical symptoms, there are also other symptoms specific to a certain type of disorder. These are:

Social phobia – a deep fear of situations that involve social contact with no apparent or logical reason. A person may not be able to function normally in situations where he has to deal with other people, afraid that he might be humiliated or rejected. To cope, he might withdraw or avoid opportunities to socialize.

[Panic disorder](#) – this disorder is characterized by frequent debilitating periods of panic attacks that affect approximately 2% of Americans. It is only considered a disorder if panic episodes occur at least four times a month over a long period of time.

Post-traumatic stress disorder – occurs after the experience of a highly stressful or traumatic event. It can manifest immediately after the trauma or it may take months or years to appear.

Obsessive-compulsive disorder or OCD are involuntary impulses, thoughts or behavior that are usually manifested as repetitive rituals like excessive showering, obsessing over the arrangement of objects,

hand washing, etc. Usually, people who have OCD are quite aware of what they are doing.

Generalized anxiety disorder – this is characterized by excessive worrying and feelings of anxiety over everyday activities such as family, friends, health or work. People with GAD have very little control over their feelings, if at all. Episodes should have occurred many times over a period of six months before it is diagnosed as GAD.

Phobia – can manifest itself as excessive and irrational fears of certain objects or situations. Most phobias are the result of other types of anxiety disorders that have not been treated. These can include claustrophobia and agoraphobia.

Questions to ask yourself

If you feel you have [anxiety disorder](#) in any form, it would be best to seek the help of a professional. Some of the symptoms associated with the disorder may be caused by health problems that need medical attention such as epilepsy, heart conditions, asthma, menopause or thyroid problems.

However, here are some questions you might want to ask yourself to determine whether you are at risk or not:

- Do I spend a lot of time worrying? Is there anything specific I am worried about?
- Do I have little or no control over my feelings of anxiety and worry?
- Do I have difficulty sleeping?
- Has there been a noticeable change in my eating and sleeping habits?
- Do I feel depressed on most days?
- Have I been using drugs or alcohol increasingly?
- Am I often irritable, restless, easily provoked or agitated?
- Has my behavior affected my family, friends, colleagues, work and regular activities in a negative way?

If your answer to most of these questions is yes, it's probably time to seek the help of a doctor. You cannot, on your own, judge the severity of your disorder and there are certain medications and psychotherapies that you may not have access to unless you seek professional help.

[Anxiety disorder](#) is a treatable psychiatric illness. It is best to seek treatment when it is still in its early stages so you can be assured of quicker results. It will take time and patience to help you eliminate the symptoms of this illness but it is quite possible to experience some positive results within a span of 3 to 6 months.

Treatment Options - Medication or Therapy

[Treating Anxiety Disorder](#) : Medication Vs. Therapy

An anxiety disorder is a very troublesome mental illness because it is very distressing and can impact a person's normal behavior and coping ability in day-to-day situations. It has the potential of completely changing a person's life and strips him of opportunities and chances for career advancement and in developing healthy social relationships. It also severely limits his perception of his surroundings and keeps him living in unhealthy fear and worry.

How anxiety disorder is diagnosed

A physician will obtain a personal and medical history of the patient.

Unlike most physiological or medical conditions, anxiety disorder cannot

be diagnosed using blood tests, blood pressure and other physical examinations. It can be determined using a thorough interview where a doctor asks the patient several questions pertaining about his condition. Medical conditions or the possibility of substance abuse should be ruled out first before the presence of an anxiety disorder is considered.

The purpose of a diagnosis is also to come up with a list of the specific criteria associated with different types of anxiety disorders. This is very important to establish because it determines what type of medications and/or therapies can work best. Failure to properly diagnose the specific anxiety disorder a person has can cause some significant problems.

There is no such thing as a 'cure' for anxiety disorder because its cause is not physiological. However, there are treatments that help in managing the illness and taking care of its symptoms. It is absolutely necessary that [treatment for anxiety disorder](#) be administered as early as possible. If not, the illness can become chronic and more difficult to treat. In fact, some anxiety disorder in advance stages can be resistant to treatment.

There are several methods used in the treatment of anxiety disorder and they can be grouped into two major categories: therapy and medications.

The use of therapy in treating anxiety disorder

Depending on the specific type of anxiety disorder a person suffers from, different therapies may be used. Cognitive behavioral therapy, also known as CBT, is one of the most common treatment methods used in anxiety disorders. The basis of CBT is in the connection of behavior symptomatic to the disorder that is associated with and caused by a pattern of thoughts and beliefs.

For example, a person with agoraphobia might think, "The train's doors are closed and locked. I can't breathe. I'm going to die in this train." Such negative thoughts, which usually have no actual basis, can in turn trigger negative thoughts that produce negative behavior. By teaching a patient to handle his apparent fear with training, reality testing, cognitive challenging and restructuring, he can actually manage his fear and later on, totally eliminate it even when faced with a similar situation.

Behavior therapy, on the other hand, uses exposure to promote desensitization of an individual. By training an individual to control his thoughts and redefine what he believes are dangerous and scary, he is able to control or manage his fears. He might also combine behavior therapy with relaxation techniques including controlled breathing to help him manage his anxiety.

The use of medications in treating anxiety disorder

Again, there is no absolute cure for anxiety disorder and even when medications are prescribed, they will not address the mental illness itself. Instead, they will help an individual cope with the physical symptoms that anxiety disorder causes. Common medications include anti-depressants (like imipramine and benzodiazepine) and selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors or SSRIs (like fluoxetine, paroxetine and sertraline). Prozac and Zoloft are some of the brand names of these drugs.

Since these are drugs, expect some benefits and risks. A doctor will be able to explain what the advantages are and the side effects of different drug treatments if there are any. It is important to understand that medications should be treated as short-term courses of treatment only

and should not be considered as the only and ultimate solution to the disorder.

Medication vs. Therapy

[Anxiety disorder](#) is a psychiatric illness and involves the mental functioning of an individual. To treat the behavior that results from this disorder, psychotherapy is the foremost and most natural choice.

Medications are only used to treat physical manifestations of the illness.

For example, drugs may be taken to help relax the muscles and prevent feelings of tension or to bring down the heart beat to a normal rate. Medications are prescribed to address physical problems for the short term. They are never used alone and are instead prescribed in combination with therapy to produce an effective long-term treatment.

Natural Remedies and Self Help Tips

[Self-Help Tips for Treating Anxiety Disorder with Natural Remedies](#) _

There are other ways that anxiety disorder sufferers can do on their own to treat their illness, such as the natural and non-drug remedies

outlined in this article. While these remedies are not substitutes for professional opinions and treatments, they may be used in conjunction with or as a supplement to the therapy and medication that a doctor may already prescribe.

The purpose of using natural remedies and turning to self-help tips for the treatment of anxiety disorder is to give the patient a certain amount of control in dealing with this illness. Many natural remedies are also gentler and easier to integrate into everyday routines while also promoting overall bodily and mental health.

Here are some of the self-help tips and natural remedies with which to manage anxiety disorder:

Change your diet

Food can affect the body in many ways and the proper diet can help ease certain symptoms of anxiety disorder. Many of the physical symptoms that a person suffers from may be the result of vitamin and mineral deficiency. As such, it is important that a balanced and sensible diet be implemented.

Intake of certain foods such as caffeine, nicotine and salt should also be controlled. Caffeine and nicotine are stimulants and can increase the adrenal response of the body. This reaction has the potential to cause nervousness, agitation, insomnia and anxiety. Salt should also be avoided or taken in moderation. It decreases the amount of potassium in the body, a mineral that is essential for the normal functions of the nervous system.

Take vitamin supplements

Certain vitamins and minerals aid the body in performing at its best. Some of them are quite helpful in fighting certain symptoms of anxiety disorder naturally. These include B-complex vitamins, magnesium and calcium. By providing the means with which to help the body relax and function properly, certain physical symptoms of the disorder are eliminated.

Use traditional herbal medicines

Some herbs have been used for many years as treatment for some forms of anxiety disorder. Chamomile tea, for example, is known to

calm nerves and help in relaxation. Other herbs such as kava, St. John's wort, skullcap and hops are also quite common in herbal tonics.

A caveat: there is very little scientific evidence to prove that these herbs are as effective as reported. When using herbal medicines, find out exactly what the side effects are and purchase only from reputable herbal shops. It is also extremely important not to combine herbal medicines with any prescription drugs, especially anti-depressants.

Try aromatherapy

Aromatherapy has been in use for thousands of years and is still considered as one of the best natural ways to induce relaxation and relieve stress, frustration and anxiety. Some scents and herbs that are used for this purpose include lavender, bergamot, frankincense, lime, jasmine, ylang ylang, sandalwood and cypress.

Relax with self-hypnosis or meditation

Self-hypnosis and meditation have been known as very effective ways of relaxing the body and clearing the mind. As treatment for anxiety disorder, meditation and self-hypnosis help reduce associated

symptoms such as increased heart and respiration rate, blood pressure and muscle tension.

Meditation, self-hypnosis and other relaxation techniques can also induce better and deeper sleep and decrease incidents of headaches, migraines and other physical discomfort. A 20 to 30-minute session performed daily can help attain a general feeling of well being and ease, allowing an anxiety disorder sufferer to be in control of his responses to anxiety attacks.

Structured problem solving

The problem with anxiety disorders is that it is an illness that needs to be healed from within. You already have all the powers of control. All you have to do is to put yourself together long enough to determine how you can actively solve the problem.

Learn to break a problem into smaller parts. Determine how each part may be solved and then perform a solution. By breaking a problem down into manageable components, you will realize that it's not too big or that it's not threatening at all. This technique helps manage milder forms of depression and generalized anxiety disorder.

Find a support group

Even non-drug therapies used for the treatment of anxiety disorder also include family groups and support groups. At a time when an illness can be overwhelming, it is very important that a person who suffers from anxiety disorder should have a support network of family, friends and medical practitioners he can trust and depend on for the duration of his treatment. He can also get in touch with community organizations that offer support and counseling.

How [Anxiety Disorders](#) Affect Work, Family and Relationships

Anxiety Disorder: How It Affects Your Work, Family and Social Relationships

Anxiety disorder is an illness that many people do not realize is quite common. There are approximately 4 million Americans who suffer from generalized anxiety disorder alone and the effects on their lives can sometimes be damaging. Anxiety disorders prevent an individual from

functioning normally in the society he lives in and inhibit his potential for both personal and professional growth.

Here is how it affects lives, families, work and relationships:

Physical symptoms can cause discomfort and more anxiety.

All forms of anxiety disorder manifest through physical symptoms including sweating, trembling, nausea, dizziness, and fainting and muscular tension. These symptoms are the body's way to protect itself from what a person perceives as a threat to him.

While anxiety disorder attacks don't have any actual threats of physical harm, when symptoms appear, they can cause temporary (and sometimes prolonged) periods of agitation and stress that usually lead to feelings of frustration. People with anxiety disorder are also easily provoked and irritated. This affects their relationships with their family, friends and colleagues in a negative way. Episodes of frequent irritability can also cause arguments and misunderstandings, giving way to larger rifts in emotional relationships.

Symptoms may last for days, causing a person to miss school, work and other important events.

Many forms of anxiety disorder have symptoms that can last for a period of time, sometimes several days. Symptoms may also appear many times over a period of months. Many persons who suffer from this disorder cannot cope. As a result, they can't go to school, drive the car to work or even go to family gatherings.

People with anxiety disorder may evade responsibility.

Many people who suffer from anxiety disorder are aware of their illness.

If they choose to give in to its pressures, they may withdraw within themselves and avoid taking responsibility for their lives and for the lives of those who depend on them.

As a result, many anxiety disorder patients no longer perform normal tasks and duties expected of them. A parent with anxiety disorder, for example, may be too depressed to take care of the needs of his or her spouse and that of their children.

A person with anxiety disorder will not be able to perform well at work.

He will be too busy worrying about a perceived threat or about another anxiety or panic attack episode to be able to handle his responsibilities

at work effectively. Furthermore, it can cast doubt on his competence either as a member of an organization and may be grounds to deny him of career advancement and promotion.

Normal everyday objects and activities can induce feelings of fear.

Agoraphobics cannot stand enclosed spaces while post-traumatic stress disorder patients will associate harmless objects with their traumatic experience. Normal things such as elevator and subway rides, doors closing, petty arguments, small misunderstandings can be amplified and perceived as bigger than they truly are.

[Anxiety disorder](#) tends to run in families

Studies have shown that children in households where at least one parent suffers from a form of anxiety disorder is at risk of developing a disorder of his own, whether during childhood or later on in his adult life. This does not mean children of anxiety disorder sufferers are genetically pre-disposed, though. It just proves that early exposure may have an effect on young children and teens.

Anxiety disorder can cause a loss of self-esteem.

If allowed to go untreated, anxiety disorder has devastating effects on the person's self-perception. Often, he or she will feel useless and incapable of success. He will often be asking himself, "What's wrong with me?" and not be able to come up with a convincing answer. He will find small, simple tasks difficult to perform, adding to his feelings of inadequacy. Already in a sad state of mind, a person with anxiety disorder may slip further into depression unless he seeks treatment. Anxiety disorder attacks can result in a vicious cycle.

Anxiety begets anxiety. When an episode of panic attack occurs, for example, the feeling will be so vicious and so unpleasant that a person will dread the next occurrence. Even if it doesn't occur, he will live in fear of it ever happening again. As a result, he will be agitated, angry, sad, and irritable and yes, anxious.

As yet, there is no magic pill that can cure anxiety disorder and rid a person of its symptoms once and for all. It might require therapy, medication or a combination of both to help a person manage his illness and get his life back to normal once again. It will take time, patience and strong will but it can be overcome.

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