

What is anxiety, how does it manifest and how do we deal with it?

Anxiety is a normal response to a difficult situation e.g., feeling stressed before an interview or scared that you can't cope with demands placed on you. The body and mind focus on dealing with a problem. The body gets ready for action ('fight or flight') and the brain focuses on thinking through every possible escape route. The flow of adrenaline into the blood stream helps us run faster and think our way out of a tricky situation more quickly. This is useful when there is a life-threatening danger to deal with but can be unhelpful when there is minimal threat.

When we are anxious, we feel wound up, nervous, worried, and tense. We may be unable to think clearly. We may go over a problem in our minds searching for a solution. Feelings can range from being a bit uneasy to a continuing sense of dread or feeling panicky and frightened.

Indications that anxiety may be an issue would be if we are:

- Not able to speak in a social situation
- Unable to go out / avoiding public places or activities

We feel the effects primarily in three ways:

- Physical: racing heart, sweating, breathlessness, dizziness
- Thoughts: repetitive, fixed view of a situation with little relation to reality
- Behaviour: withdrawal/avoiding situations

Anxiety disorders

Adults and children who are constantly anxious may have trouble with sleeping or concentration; feel restless, irritable, and tired. For some, anxiety causes such sustained discomfort and disruption to their everyday life that it is called an 'anxiety disorder'. There are several diagnoses of anxiety disorders including:

- Generalised anxiety
- Agoraphobia
- Social phobia
- Panic disorder
- Obsessive compulsive disorder
- Post-traumatic stress disorder

Remember you can learn how to self-manage this condition.

Symptoms may vary, but they all have in common persistent feelings of high anxiety causing discomfort and disruption to everyday living.

If symptoms continue to adversely affect how you live your life, then it is recommended that you seek professional help.

Panic attacks

Panic attacks affect 1 in 10 people during their lives but they are not life-threatening. They involve feelings of severe anxiety that start and finish quite suddenly. Uncomfortable physical symptoms of intense anxiety can make people feel that they are about to die, collapse or lose control of their minds. These frightening thoughts in turn intensify the panic. Concentrate on breathing and knowing that these feelings will pass. Tell family, whanau, friends, or workmates you trust about your experience.

Managing anxiety

1. Remember that severe anxiety and panic is preventable
2. Breathe slowly
3. Focus on an object to help concentration
4. Slow down, relax
5. Learn what triggers your anxiety

If we know what triggers our anxiety, we can be prepared and think ahead of the strategies we can use. Building our knowledge of ourselves in this



when *life* works better,
business works better

Pai ake te oranga, pai ake te pakihi

way is often referred to as insight and can assist us in realising our potential and developing good self-awareness.

If you need some support or are feeling overwhelmed by anxiety you can contact a Vitae Clinician by phoning **0508 664 981** or email **The Vitae Team**