

Anxiety

-- A one-eyed cat watching two rat holes

Now there's an informal, convenient, confidential way to get insight and information – **"Let's Talk."**



What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is something we all experience from time to time. Most people can relate to feeling tense, uncertain and, perhaps, fearful at the thought of sitting an exam, going to hospital, attend an interview or starting a new job. You may worry about feeling uncomfortable, appearing foolish or how successful you will be. In turn, these worries can affect your sleep, appetite and ability to concentrate.

Short-term anxiety can be useful. Feeling nervous before an exam can make you feel more alert, and enhance your performance. If everything goes well, the anxiety will go away. And if the feelings of anxiety overwhelm you, your ability to concentrate and do well may suffer.

However, your body reacts in the same way to situations that you find threatening, but which you can't deal with appropriately by fighting or running away. Situations like this may include public speaking, driving test etc.

The 'fight or flight' reflex

Anxiety and fear are actually important for survival because they act as a mechanism to protect the body against stress or danger. Anxiety and fear trigger the release of hormones, such as adrenalin. Adrenalin causes your heart to beat faster to carry blood where it's most needed.

You breathe faster to provide the extra oxygen required for energy. You sweat to prevent overheating. Your mouth may feel dry as your digestive system slows down to allow more blood to be deflected to your muscles.

Your senses become heightened and your brain becomes more alert. These changes enable the body to take action and protect itself in a dangerous situation, either by running away or fighting a foe. It's known as the 'fight or flight' reaction.

Once the danger has passed, other hormones are released, which may cause you to shake as your muscles start to relax. The response is useful for protecting you against physical danger.

Effects of anxiety

Anxiety will have an effect on both the body and the mind.

- **Physical effects** (Headaches. Rapid Breathing, pounding heart, nausea and sickness, need to visit the toilet, butterfly feelings)
- **Psychological effects** (fear, heightened alertness, being on edge, irritable, inability to relax/concentrate, weepy)
- **Panic attacks** (rapid build-up of overwhelming sensations of pounding heartbeat, feeling faint, sweating, nausea, chest pains, breathing discomfort, feelings of losing control, shaky limbs and legs turning to jelly)
- **Health problems** (long term affects weaken your immune system, heart or kidney problems, digestive difficulties)
- **Social Problems** (difficult to hold down a job, develop or maintain good relationships or simply to enjoy leisure time)

Some more anxious than others

Something distressing may have happened to you in the past, and because you were unable to deal with the emotions at the time, you may become anxious about encountering the situation again, just in case it stirs up the same feelings of distress.

- **Worry about the future** (start to feel anxious about events beyond our control, such as the threat of nuclear war, of being attacked, of developing cancer, or of losing a job)
- **A learned response** (picked up early on in life, a mixture of personality, current circumstances and childhood experience.)
- **Anxiety inducing diet** (caffeine, excess sugar poor diet, drug misuse, exhaustion, stress and medication side effects)
- **A vicious circle** (feel anxious because they dread feeling the symptoms of anxiety, and then they experience those symptoms because they are having anxious thoughts.)

Get in touch, for a **FREE Consultation at CDFD Campus**, (Wednesday 9.30am-6pm)

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Self Management of Anxiety

- **Controlling the symptoms** (breathing and relaxation techniques, and by replacing distressing, negative thoughts with positive, peaceful ones)
- **Assertiveness training** (self defense classes, Learning how to handle difficult situations)
- **complementary therapies** (Yoga, meditation, aromatherapy, massage, reflexology, hypnotherapy)
- **Exercise** (Exercise uses up the adrenalin and other hormones that are produced under stress, allowing muscles to relax.)
- **Healthy living** (Avoid stimulants, healthy diet, plenty of sleep)

Treatment Options to Counter Anxiety

- **Cognitive Therapy** (in groups or individually, 1-4 times a week, Helps modify earlier maladaptive thought patterns)
- **Coping Skill training** (Focused both on appropriate behaviour and on improving skills in understanding the cues that people/environment give during social interaction)
- **Medication** (lowest possible dose, for the shortest possible time, beta-blockers, you may be offered a tricyclic antidepressant)
- **Support groups** (talk to a group member about what's making you anxious, learn from their success)

The counselling service offers free, friendly drop-in sessions with counselor/therapist at CDFD campus.

It's a chance to briefly share what's on your mind, find support, and get recommendations.