Talkspace

Anxiety

Anxiety is a normal human response to a real or perceived threat. Everyone experiences anxiety from time to time, as it's the brain's way of helping us respond appropriately in dangerous or stressful situations. However, when anxiety is persistent, out of proportion, difficult to control, or interferes with your ability to function normally, it may be a sign of an anxiety disorder. Anxiety disorders are the most common mental health condition, with an estimated 300 million people affected worldwide. There are a number of treatments available for anxiety, including medication and therapies. If you have concerns about your mental health or are experiencing symptoms of an anxiety disorder, please seek advice from a medical or mental health professional.

Common symptoms of anxiety disorder

- Increased heart rate or palpitations
- Rapid breathing or shortness of breath
- Sweaty, cold, numb, or tingling sensations
- Restlessness or irritability
- Fatigue, insomnia, or headaches
- Difficulty concentrating
- Sense of fear or uneasiness
- Feeling of panic or impending doom
- Thinking about something over and over
- Avoiding places, people, or objects

Types of anxiety disorders

There are a number of anxiety disorders, but the most common are:

- Generalized Anxiety Disorder: chronic, excessive worry, often about everyday things
- Panic Disorder: repeat episodes of sudden, intense fear and anxiety with physical symptoms that mimic a heart attack
- Social Anxiety Disorder: persistent and overwhelming worry about social interaction, fear of others judging you or being embarrassed
- Phobias: intense and often irrational fear of specific objects or situations

Risk factors for anxiety disorders

Anxiety has a variety of causes, including genetics, environment, and experience. People who have experienced extreme stress or trauma (such as abuse or violence) are more likely to develop an anxiety disorder. Substance abuse, other mental health disorders, or prolonged or serious physical health issues also raise the risk of developing an anxiety disorder.

Managing anxiety

While anxiety may reduce your quality of life and interfere with your ability to function, there are things you can do to reduce or manage symptoms.

Professional support: Therapy and/or medication have been shown to be effective in treating anxiety. Seek a medical or mental health consultation if you have concerns.
S**tress management:** Identify what is contributing to your current stress levels, and explore where you can avoid, adapt, or restructure to decrease these stressors.
Self-care: Ensure you are caring for your whole self: mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually. Even small things like staying hydrated, establishing an adequate sleep schedule, and eating regular meals can improve your well-being. Establish or recommit to habits around exercise, mindfulness, and meditation.
Grounding: Practice grounding yourself by splashing your face with cold water, taking slow deep breaths, or identifying all the objects of one color around you.

For more help, or if you are feeling suicidal or distressed: Call 1-800-273-8255 or 988