

How Do Your Worries Affect Others?

Objective: To help you see how your excessive worrying and anxiety is affecting those around you.

You Should Know

For most people with anxiety disorders, their worries are so prevalent and uncontrolled that they cannot see how their constant worrying affects those around them. If you find yourself worrying and anxious all of the time, then it is almost certain that your state of mind and your behaviors are affecting those around you.

The following are five common ways that your anxiety can affect your relationships. You should note that your anxiety can affect your relationships in different ways at different times.

You may be overly dependent.

People with anxiety disorders often seek constant reassurance from those around them. They may want to hear that everything is going to be okay and they may also require the physical presence of certain people in anxiety provoking situations.

You may reject the company of others.

Anxiety disorders can cause people to avoid certain social situations as well as certain people. Some people with anxiety disorders are ashamed of their constant worrying and associated fears and behaviors, so they find it easier to just be alone.

You may adopt a restricted lifestyle that also restricts those around you.

Anxiety disorders typically cause people to lead a restricted life. This can be hard on the people around you who are constantly disappointed. People with anxiety disorders may avoid traveling, going to crowded places, or doing things that are unfamiliar. In general, people with anxiety disorders seek familiarity and avoid situations where there may be unwanted surprises. This cautious lifestyle will also affect those around you who may limit activities in order to keep you from getting upset.

You may turn to alcohol or drugs to calm your anxiety.

It is common for people with anxiety disorders to try and self-medicate using drugs and alcohol. Obviously, this can present an entirely new set of problems that will affect those around you.

The Empathy Test

This worksheet is designed to help you put yourself in other people's shoes and consider how your anxiety is affecting them. This exercise is not intended to make you feel guilty about your behavior, and it is certainly not intended to make you feel more anxious. Rather this exercise can help you better understand your anxiety disorder and hopefully motivate you to conquer your worries and fears, if not for your own well-being, then for the sake of others.

Fill in the names of significant people in your life who are affected by your anxiety disorders. These could be relatives, friends, or co-workers. Then go back and think about how your anxious behaviors affect each person. In the third column, you may wish to verify your thoughts with each person. You may see that you are correct about how others are affected, but you may also be wrong. It is entirely possible that many people close to you are not that aware of your anxiety.

Significant Person	How does	Verification (What did they say?)	What Can You Do Differently?

Reflections on This Exercise

Is there one person in your life that is most affected by your problems with worrying and anxiety?

Is that person aware you are trying to overcome your problems?

How do you think life will change for that person if you overcome your anxiety and excessive worrying?

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 1- = extremely helpful)

Is there anything in particular you learned from this exercise?
