

Is Anxiety a Problem for You?

Objective

To identify the symptoms of anxiety and determine if those symptoms are creating problems in your life.

You Should Know

Everyone experiences anxiety, and sometimes worry or fearfulness signals danger, letting you know that you need to leave a situation or be on high alert. However, sometimes anxiety becomes exaggerated and unhealthy, limiting your experiences and impacting your social life, relationships, and how well you function at home and in school.

Teens deal with lots of changes and uncertainties but, for some teens, anxiety becomes a chronic state that interferes with their ability to attend school and perform at their highest potential. Participating in extracurricular and social activities, as well as making and keeping friends, becomes challenging.

Sometimes anxiety is generalized, free-floating feelings of unease or worry, or it develops into panic attacks or phobias. Do you know the common symptoms of anxiety? They are:

- Excessive fear and worry
- Restlessness
- Wariness or uneasiness
- Constant nervousness
- Heightened self-consciousness
- Overly shy or introverted
- Frequent thoughts of losing control
- Unrealistic concerns about social or academic competence
- Intense fear of a specific object or activity
- Obsessions (repeating thoughts) or compulsions (repeating actions to relieve anxiety)

You might also have physical symptoms, such as sensations of unreality, shortness of breath, headaches, trembling, sweating, muscle tension, choking sensations, chest pains, stomachaches, nausea, dizziness, and numbness or tingling in the arms or legs.

What to Do

Anxiety can include feelings, physical sensations, thoughts, and behaviors. The following list might not include all of the thoughts, feelings, or body sensations that you have when you are anxious. Check off the statements that apply to you. Add anything you experience that is missing from this list.

- People tell me I worry a lot.
- I have a hard time controlling and changing my thoughts.
- I get annoyed and snap at people when I'm anxious.
- There are events or experiences from my past that trigger anxious feelings.
- If I have an upcoming event (for example, a big test or class presentation), I worry about it for days or weeks.
- I feel on edge, like I'm waiting for something bad to happen.
- I get upset when things don't go my way or plans change.
- I worry about what people are thinking or saying about me.
- I have a hard time focusing or paying attention because I'm distracted by worry.
- I think about the same things over and over again.
- I feel like I'm going crazy or losing my mind.
- I take even small things really seriously.
- When I'm really anxious I sweat, shake, feel lightheaded, or experience other unpleasant body sensations.
- I avoid certain places or things because they make me anxious.
- There are activities or behaviors that I do over and over again.
- My mind races and I have a hard time falling asleep.
- I spend time thinking about things I can't control, or worrying about what might happen in the future.
- I avoid talking with people I don't know.
- I'm afraid I will embarrass or humiliate myself.
- I usually focus on what can go wrong.
- Worrying makes me feel sick.
- I avoid going to dances, parties, or out on dates.
- There is too much pressure to get good grades.
- I get really nervous taking tests or presenting in class.
- I don't like to try new things.

____ I use drugs or alcohol to deal with my anxiety.

____ I am afraid of something specific (for example, dogs, thunderstorms, the dark, riding in an airplane, receiving an injection, being away from my parents or caregivers, etc.).

Describe: _____

____ Other: _____

____ Other: _____

____ Other: _____

Add up your number of checks. How many did you check off? _____

If you checked off more than 10 statements, anxiety is a problem for you.

Are there other thoughts, feelings, behaviors, or physical sensations that you think might be caused by your anxiety? Describe.

What areas of your life have been negatively affected by your anxiety?

What do you do to deal with anxiety? Describe.

Name someone you can talk to about this problem:

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?
