

Fact Sheet 1

Anxiety Disorders

This fact sheet provides information about anxiety, anxiety disorders, types of anxiety disorders and anxiety treatment methods.

What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is the feeling of fear that a person experiences when stressed or reacting to a threat of danger. A person may become anxious for many different reasons, including concerns about exams, an issue in the workplace, or a break up with a partner.

Some common symptoms of anxiety are:

- Feelings of helplessness
- Confusion
- Faintness/dizziness
- Pounding heartbeat
- Hot and cold sweats
- Irritability
- Breathing difficulties
- Nausea/stomach ache
- Restlessness
- Increased blood pressure
- Muscle tension

What is an Anxiety Disorder?

It is natural to feel anxious when faced with stress in your everyday life. For most people it helps them deal with responding to a threat or stressful event, however for some it may begin to affect their daily lives and can make it difficult to cope.

In this situation, the person may be experiencing an anxiety disorder.

Different Types of Anxiety Disorders

Some of the more common Anxiety Disorders are:

Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD)

This disorder is characterised by excessive anxiety and worry about everyday events or activities. This affects a person's ability to "turn off" and relax, and can significantly affect their daily life. It affects approximately 5% of the Australian population.

Social Anxiety Disorder

Social Anxiety Disorder involves the person feeling overwhelming and persistent feelings of anxiety when faced with social interactions.

These include performance situations, where the person fears intense scrutiny, negativity, humiliation and embarrassment, whilst being judged by others. It affects 3 – 13% of the population in Australia.

Panic Disorder with/or without Agoraphobia

This disorder involves the person experiencing recurrent panic attacks, with a constant fear of experiencing another attack. Agoraphobia may develop, where a person begins to avoid places and situations outside of the home, as they fear that they may trigger another panic attack. This disorder affects 2% of the Australian population (30% of the population have experienced a panic attack during a given year).

Specific Phobias

Phobias involve extreme fear and anxiety if exposed to a fearful or anxiety provoking situation, object, or place. There are many different types of phobias which may affect each person differently. Some common examples are a fear of flying, large crowds or enclosed spaces.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

PTSD is a set of reactions that may develop following the experience of a traumatic and frightening event. Symptoms can include constantly re-living the event through memories, dreams, flashbacks, images, etc. It can have a significant impact on a person's daily life. More than one-quarter of a million Australians experience PTSD in any one year.

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

Obsessions are overwhelming thoughts/images or impulses, where a person feels compelled to carry out ritualistic behavioural and mental acts (compulsions). This disorder affects

approximately 2 – 3% of the Australian population, and has a significant impact on a person's everyday life.

How can Anxiety be treated?

Treatment for anxiety and anxiety disorders can effectively restore normal functioning in most cases.

Life Resolutions® psychologists may use a combination of:

- **Psychological treatments** (such as cognitive behavioural therapy, acceptance and commitment therapy, and/or solution-focussed therapy) which are evidence-based treatments aiming to change patterns of behaviour, thoughts and beliefs which may trigger anxiety. In therapy, the psychologist may use desensitisation, which is a slow and gradual process of exposing a person to the trigger which causes anxiety whilst also teaching a person coping strategies.
- **Education** about anxiety and about the specific anxiety disorder. This will involve talking about the disorder and dispelling fears and myths that people commonly have about the disorder
- **Anxiety management techniques** such as challenging unhelpful thoughts, learning new coping strategies, controlled breathing exercises and relaxation training
- **Medication**, if agreed by a medical practitioner, may also be used. Medication alone will not cure an anxiety disorder but can assist to keep symptoms under control whilst receiving psychological care.

About Life Resolutions®

Life Resolutions offers a confidential and professional psychological service, specialising in providing counselling to individuals, couples, families and organisations seeking assistance with personal, life or work issues.

Our fully registered and highly qualified psychologists will support you in a warm and caring environment to overcome difficulties and barriers that hold you back in life. Counselling will enable you to feel happier and more satisfied in yourself and in your relationships.

Life Resolutions® psychologists are registered with T.A.C, WorkCover, and Victims of Crime and provide Employee Assistance Programs (EAP).

Our psychologists are also registered with all major private health providers.

For inquiries and bookings, visit the Contact Us page at www.liferesolutions.com.au