

**April
2015**

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**This Month's
Topic:
Addressing
Anxiety**

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CARE's WorkLife Solutions Monthly Wire

Anxiety Disorders and Anxiety Attacks

It's normal to feel anxious when facing a challenging situation, such as a new job interview, a tough exam, or a blind date. But if your worries and fears seem overwhelming and interfere with your daily life, you may be suffering from an anxiety disorder. Approximately 19% of U.S. adults have anxiety disorders in a given year. There are many different types of anxiety disorders—and also many effective treatments and self-help strategies. Once you understand your anxiety disorder, there are steps you can take to reduce your symptoms and regain control of your life.

Understanding anxiety disorders

Anxiety is your body's natural response to danger, an automatic alarm that goes off when you feel threatened, under pressure, or are facing a stressful situation.

In moderation, anxiety isn't always a bad thing. In fact, anxiety can help you stay alert and focused, spur you to action, and motivate you to solve problems. But

when your anxiety is constant or overwhelming, when it interferes with your daily relationships and activities, it stops being functional—that's when you've crossed the line from normal, productive anxiety into the territory of anxiety disorders.

Signs and symptoms of anxiety disorders

Because anxiety disorders are a group of related conditions rather than a single disorder, they can look very different from person to person. One individual may suffer from intense anxiety attacks that strike without warning, while another gets panicky at the thought of mingling at a party. Someone else may struggle with a disabling fear of driving, or uncontrollable, intrusive thoughts. Yet another may live in a constant state of tension, worrying about anything and everything.

Despite their different forms, all anxiety disorders share one major symptom: persistent or severe fear or worry in situations where most people wouldn't feel

threatened.

Anxiety attacks and their symptoms

Anxiety attacks, also known as panic attacks, are episodes of intense panic or fear. Anxiety attacks usually occur suddenly and without warning. Sometimes there's an obvious trigger—getting stuck in an elevator, for example, or thinking about the big speech you have to give—but in other cases, the attacks come out of the blue. Anxiety attacks usually peak within ten minutes, and they rarely last more than thirty minutes. But during that short time, the terror can be so severe that you feel as if you're about to die or totally lose control. The physical symptoms of anxiety attacks are themselves so frightening that many people believe they're having a heart attack. After an anxiety attack is over, you may be worried about having another one, particularly in a public place where help isn't available or you can't easily escape.

This month's Webinar topic "Addressing Anxiety: How to Take Charge"

Most people experience some anxiety as a regular part of life. But daily worry, trouble sleeping, physical symptoms, and difficulties with others could produce overwhelming negative thoughts. Learn how to gain control over negative thoughts and increase recognition of the positives in your life.

Tuesday, April 21st at 12pm and 2pm ET
Register online at www.caresworklifesolutions.com
or call 866-888-1555.

Symptoms of anxiety attacks include:

- ◆ Surge of overwhelming panic,
- ◆ Feeling of losing control or going crazy,
- ◆ Heart palpitations or chest pain,
- ◆ Feeling like you're going to pass out,
- ◆ Trouble breathing or choking sensation,
- ◆ Hyperventilation,
- ◆ Hot flashes or chills,
- ◆ Trembling or shaking,
- ◆ Nausea or stomach cramps
- ◆ Feeling detached or unreal.

Types of anxiety disorders

There are six major types of anxiety disorders, each with their own distinct symptom profile: generalized anxiety disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, panic disorder (anxiety attacks), phobia, post-traumatic stress disorder, and social anxiety disorder.

If constant worries and fears distract you from your day-to-day activities or you're troubled by a persistent feeling that something bad is going to happen, you may be suffering from **generalized anxiety disorder** (GAD). People with GAD are chronic worrywarts who feel anxious nearly all of the time, though they may not even know why. Anxiety related to GAD often shows up as physical symptoms like insomnia, stomach upset, restlessness, and often fatigue.

Panic disorder is characterized by repeated, unexpected panic attacks, as well as a fear of experiencing another episode. Panic disorder may also be accompanied by agoraphobia, which is a fear of being in places where escape or help would be difficult in the event of a panic attack. If you have agoraphobia, you are likely to avoid public places such as shopping malls or confined spaces such as an airplane.

Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is characterized by unwanted thoughts or behaviors

that seem impossible to stop or control. If you have OCD, you may be troubled by obsessions, such as a recurring worry that you forgot to turn off the oven or that you might hurt someone. You may also suffer from uncontrollable compulsions, such as washing your hands over and over.

A **phobia** is an unrealistic or exaggerated fear of a specific object, activity, or situation that in reality presents little to no danger. Common phobias include fear of animals such as snakes and spiders, fear of flying, and fear of heights. In the case of a severe phobia, you might go to extreme lengths to avoid the thing you fear. Unfortunately, avoidance only strengthens the phobia.

If you have a debilitating fear of being seen negatively by others and humiliated in public, you may have **social anxiety disorder**, also known as social phobia. Social anxiety disorder can be thought of as extreme shyness. In some severe cases, social situations are avoided altogether. Performance anxiety (better known as stage fright) is the most common type of social phobia.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is an extreme anxiety disorder that can occur in the aftermath of a traumatic or life-threatening event. PTSD can be thought of as a panic attack that rarely, if ever, lets up. Symptoms of PTSD include flashbacks or nightmares about what happened, hypervigilance, startling easily, withdrawing from others, and avoiding situations that remind you of the event.

Self-help for anxiety, anxiety attacks, and anxiety disorders

Not everyone who worries a lot has an anxiety disorder. You may be anxious because of an overly demanding schedule, lack of exercise or sleep, pressure at home or work, or even from too much coffee.

The bottom line is that if your lifestyle is unhealthy and stressful, you're more likely to feel anxious—whether or not you have an anxiety disorder. So if you

feel like you worry too much, take some time to evaluate how well you're caring for yourself.

- Do you make time each day for relaxation and fun?
- Are you getting the emotional support you need?
- Are you taking care of your body?
- Are you overloaded with too many responsibilities?
- Do you ask for help when you need it?

If your stress levels are through the roof, think about how you can bring your life back into balance. There may be some responsibilities you can give up, turn down, or delegate to others. If you're feeling isolated or unsupported, find someone you trust to confide in. Just talking about your worries can make them seem less frightening.

When to seek CARE's WorkLife Solutions professional help for anxiety concerns

While self-help coping strategies for anxiety can be very effective, if your worries, fears, or anxiety attacks have become so great that they're causing extreme distress or disrupting your daily routine, it is important to seek professional help.

If you're experiencing a lot of physical anxiety symptoms, consider getting a medical checkup. Your doctor can check to make sure that your anxiety isn't caused by a medical condition, such as a thyroid problem, hypoglycemia, or asthma. Since certain drugs and supplements can cause anxiety, your doctor will also want to know about any prescriptions, over-the-counter medications and herbal remedies you are taking.

If you are experiencing overwhelming feelings of anxiety or stress and it is effecting your daily routine, you can call CARE's WorkLife Solutions 24/7, Absolutely FREE and with complete confidentiality. You can talk with a master level counselor who will work with you to devise a course of treatment to help you with your concern.

Call Toll Free 866.888.1555

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