

Anxiety: Knowing When to Get Help

Everyone feels anxious on occasion - especially when facing a big event. But when anxiety seems to be out of control or overwhelming, it is time to ask for help.

If you or someone you know feels distressed most of the time or without an obvious reason, it could be an anxiety disorder.

Anxiety disorders are one of the most common mental illnesses in the United States with more than 19 million people affected by some form of anxiety disorder each year.

Anxiety disorders often coexist with other illnesses such as depression, substance abuse, or eating disorders.

The different forms of anxiety disorders include:

Generalized Anxiety Disorder – excessive worry or anxiousness about normal life events that lasts longer than 6 months and is difficult to control.

Panic Disorder – sudden feelings of fearfulness or terror that occur without warning and are accompanied by physical symptoms of chest pain, heart palpitations, shortness of breath, dizziness, sweating, trembling, numbness, nausea or abdominal discomfort, as well as feelings of unreality or fear of going crazy.

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder – repetitive thoughts or rituals that are difficult or seemingly impossible to control.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder – re-experiencing a traumatic event in nightmares or flashbacks, accompanied by a depressed mood, irritability, numbing of emotions, being easily startled or distracted, or avoiding situations associated with the trauma.

Social Phobia – overwhelming or disabling fear of social or performance situations that leads to avoidance or extreme discomfort.

Specific Phobia – extreme anxiety or fear brought on by a specific object or situation that leads to avoidance or extreme discomfort.

Agoraphobia – extreme anxiety or avoidance of places or situations from which escape may be difficult or embarrassing.

If you experience any of these symptoms, seek help from a qualified mental health professional. If someone you work with or supervise seems to be experiencing some of these symptoms, discuss your observations with them and encourage them to seek help through their Employee Assistance Program. Do not try to diagnose the anxiety disorder, just encourage them to get help. Treatment for anxiety disorders is very effective and leads to significant improvements in productivity and quality of life.

Adapted from the following sources:

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