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## Taking Control of Your Life

By M.D. Griffin

The Complete Guide to Understanding  
and Treating Anxiety Disorders

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## **Part-I: Introduction**

### **1. Anxiety Disorders – An Introduction**

'Anxiety disorder' is a term that covers many different types of nervous conditions that cause anxiousness, feelings of fear or other unwanted, counterproductive or irrational feelings. These feelings of anxiety can be due to a particular phobia, to a particular event or happening earlier in life, or may be due to pathological (medical) uneasiness.

There may be no warning of the onset of your anxiety disorders. They can be sudden, or develop gradually over many years and such events are likely to cause profound disturbance of the sufferer's normal daily routine.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the occurrence of anxiety disorders is assuming alarming proportions.

They afflict more than forty million American adults. Many adolescents, and even children, also develop these disorders. Most patients are seriously affected, with the disorder(s) affecting them for several months, or even years.

You may suffer frequent bouts of fear, concern, or apprehension of some worrying event.

#### **Occurrences**

You may feel a short but severe period of anxiety, or the condition may be chronic with several periods that are less severe.

The disorder is likely to be connected with some earlier traumatic event in your life and cause nightmares, phobias or unwelcome thoughts that constantly flood your mind.

Sometimes, these anxiety spells may develop into an intense, on-going fear.

They can make you become a prisoner in your own home. You may not feel secure anywhere else, but staying in your own home, alone, may also terrify you.

You may be anxious about, or develop an intense fear of, darkness, night-time, looming events or bills, your health or the health of a loved one.

Anxiety can be acute or chronic. It can come in the form of be an acute, brief moment of anxiety – lasting from a few minutes to a few hours - or it can be a chronic, lifelong condition.

Brief anxiety spells often happen just *before* a special event, like a stage performance, examination, business presentation or 'the first date.'

These anxiety spells often end once you have passed the point of no return and begin the activity. The discomfort, anxiousness or fear might, however, stay with you until the event finishes. This type of acute attack is quite common.

Dwelling on what happened at an event, or events, in your life, to the extent that you experience acute moments of embarrassment or emotional pain, while alone or with others, for months or even years, is considered to be a chronic condition and a cause for

concern.

When these feelings get to the point that you can no longer keep them in perspective and they affect your ability to carry on a normal life, it is time to seek professional help.

Sometimes, anxiety disorders occur in combination with alcoholism, drug addiction or similar conditions, which may well mask the anxiety disorder. You may not realize it exists unless you seek help to you treat the condition.

Often, certain physical symptoms accompany anxiety disorders. You may feel pain in your chest, dizziness, headaches, a rapid pulse rate, trembling, muscular tension, fatigue and stomach disorders as well as fear of death or some other unfortunate happening.

These feelings can be very intense, and they might affect the way you think.

You may develop a phobia of something very ordinary and escalate it to such an alarming extent that you make others feel scared too. Regular or frequent occurrences of your disorder may lead to serious depression.

Sometimes, an anxiety disorder leads to other disorders. Anxiousness about food or eating, for instance, could also affect your sleep or even your ability to get along with others.

Sometimes, these disorders may be symptom of serious medical illnesses, like cancer or heart disease, and a warning for you to seek medical attention.

## The Different Types of Anxiety Disorders

There are many different types of anxiety disorders, including Social phobia, Panic phobia, Agoraphobia, Generalized disorder, Post-traumatic-stress disorder, Compulsive and Obsessive disorders. Some could be present from a very young age, or they may start after an a severe trauma, such as war, rape, assault, child abuse or natural disasters, like floods and earthquakes.

Minor anxieties can become huge issues under heavy stress.

### Treatments

There are innumerable therapies and treatments available for anxiety disorders. Certain drugs may help to provide some relief or even the possibility of a complete cure in some cases.

Some patients have had good results when the advice of their personal medical doctor was combined with various cognitive therapies (forms of psychotherapy that are based on the belief that the way we think may have a positive or negative effect on they way we feel and deal with our life experiences.)

You can become a stronger and more effective person by developing an optimistic attitude and learning to accept the tragedies of life.

Additional knowledge can be gathered from many different sources, like the Internet, books, magazines and journals.

Increasing your knowledge about your condition can be a very important factor in keeping most anxiety disorders at bay.

## **Part-II: Understanding Anxiety Disorders**

### **What is an Anxiety Disorder?**

The term 'anxiety disorder' covers a wide spectrum of different emotional feelings, including undue fear of an upcoming event, fear of the unknown, phobias or other pathological conditions where anxiety is the main emotion to the extent that it hinders the normal functioning of your life.

Anxiety disorders can occur suddenly or gradually over time. Sometimes, they occur with other serious ailments like heart disease, cancer and other neurological ailments.

There are many symptoms that often accompany an anxiety disorder. These symptoms include an increased pulse rate, higher blood pressure, nausea, gastro-intestinal disorders, fatigue, headaches, dizziness, restlessness and agitation.

### 3. Why Do People Get Anxiety Disorders?

Many factors may contribute to the occurrence of anxiety disorders. There is not just one cause for all anxiety disorders. They may occur as the result of a combination of many different factors.

**Those factors may include:**

**Childhood events:** Disturbing and traumatic events in childhood, such as child abuse, loss of parents, separation from family, accident or illness, can leave a lasting effect on the mind. Even having been bullied, embarrassed, or made fun of at school can produce lasting anxieties that manifest into a serious anxiety disorder later in life. Most children are bullied or teased at times during their school years and most of them grow up without developing anxiety disorders from those experiences while others can be very traumatized.

**Genetic:** Parents with anxiety disorder can pass it on to, or cause their children to be more likely to suffer from this type of condition, because of genetic factors or the environment that they provide in the family home.

Some families have a history of, or predominance of anxiousness or depression, or both.

**Stress and Trauma:** Stressful, traumatic events can contribute to anxiety disorders. Domestic violence, rape (or other forms of sexual molestation), physical assault, death of a family member or loss due to natural disasters like floods or earthquakes, leaves a person

feeling helpless. This feeling of powerlessness leads to fear and resultant anxiousness.

Sometimes, the anxiety associated with social traumas (loss of job, divorce, not being able to find employment, financial problems), can be even more devastating and debilitating than random violence or natural disaster, due to its internalization.

**Substance abuse:** Alcoholism and drug addiction may contribute to anxiety disorders in some people. And, not surprisingly, most alcoholics and drug addicts had some sort of disorder before they became addicted. The addictive substance was a coping mechanism for a time against the anxious, out of control feelings.

**Medical ailments:** Certain disorders, like eating or sleeping disorders, depression and other nervous ailments, may contribute to more anxiety disorders, and possible medical problems. These disorders do not allow the body to function normally. Without proper sleep or nutrition, anyone is likely to become very anxious. Similar intense feelings are caused by flood, violence, or social disaster and even an eating disorder, where someone might gain, say, 100 pounds in a year and get anxious or depressed because of the effects on their health, social life and self-esteem.

**Personality:** Whether a person is born with low self-esteem or develops it in later life, they are likely to become anxious. This effect is also likely to happen if you have poor self confidence, an incapacity for tackling simple problems, jealousy or envy.

**Social and Economic Issues:** Believe it or not, the rich are not immune to anxiety, peer pressure and stress. Life is stressful at all levels of human society. Being poor gives you may put more

pressure on you – just to survive and try to improve your situation for yourself and your family.

But, wealth does not endow anyone with an immunity to worry. There are the same health and social pressures, probably greater pressure on them in their work and, instead of worries of paying the bills are the concerns about whether people really like them (or just their money) and the, possibly baseless, fear of what they could do if they lost their wealth. No one is immune unless they focus on remaining positive!

**Brain abnormalities:** Medications prescribed to alleviate symptoms of some ailments can sometimes affect the chemical balance in the brain and cause an anxiety disorder.

Allergic reactions to certain medicines might also lead to an anxiety disorder. Serotonin and dopamine are two important neurotransmitters of the brain. Anything that may cause imbalances in their normal levels may sometimes lead to an increase in anxiety and restlessness.



## Types of Anxiety Disorders

Anxiety disorders can have different symptoms accompanying them. Some symptoms that are common to **all types** of anxiety disorders are a debilitating fear of something real, whether past present or future, or imagined. This becomes the main cause of that anxiety disorder. More women than men suffer anxiety disorders.

### Types of Anxiety Disorders

#### ***Panic Disorder***

Someone can be said to have the full anxiety disorder, rather than just maybe suffering isolated incidents that we all encounter at some time, where attacks are repeated, unexpected and cause the sufferer to have an extended period (say a month or more) of worry about the consequences and implications of the attack or the possibility of it recurring or to change their behavior because of the attack.

Common symptoms include weakness, sweatiness, nausea, dizziness, chilly hands, rapid pulse and numbness. Repeated occurrences may cause you to alter your routine, or avoid situations or places that are associated with your anxiety and lead to more serious crises.

With this disorder, one may become paranoid about the factors which brought, to the extent that you can't stop thinking about it. That negative focus ensures continual anxiety, loss of sleep, decrease of appetite (or eating binges) and a greater possibility of another panic attack.

### ***Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)***

When a person feels compelled to repeat an action over and over, or can't stop thinking about one particular person or topic to the exclusion of everything else that might be important to them, they are likely to suffer extreme anxiety because they *fail to take control and reduce their obsessive thoughts or acts*, they have the psychoneurotic disorder known as OCD, or Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder.

A sufferer may feel compelled to wash their hands every 10 minutes, or to go through the house unlocking and relocking the doors many times before they feel sure that they are really locked up. Another person might check every half hour or so that the stove is really off, whether or not they had even gone near it during that period.

These are classic examples of compulsion.

Examples of obsession include the injured lover who can't keep from thinking and exclusively talking about the one who wronged them, or the person who can't stop obsessing about their fear of ageing, or dying, or how (and what) other people may think of them. *People* indulge in this behavior because acting out their obsessions and compulsions brings (very temporary) relief from their intense feelings of anxiety.

Symptoms occur intermittently, but sometimes become very severe and may prevent you from carrying out your normal activities. Some patients with this anxiety disorder do not respond well to normal therapy treatments.

## ***Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)***

When a person experiences a highly stressing event outside the range of normal human experience, a psychological reaction that includes depression, anxiety, flashbacks, recurrent nightmares and avoidance of reminders of the incident or event may occur.

This condition is also known as **delayed-distress-disorder**, **delayed-stress-syndrome**, **post-traumatic stress syndrome** or **combat fatigue** which was the first term that was applied to it.

This anxiety disorder is due to physical trauma to yourself, a loved one, a close friend or even a stranger. It might result from you witnessing a traumatic event. Common scenarios include war, car accidents, plane wrecks, explosions or bombings, rape, child abuse, kidnapping or natural disasters like earthquakes or floods.

People with this disorder regularly relive the incidents and become emotionally numb. That leads to an overall loss of interest in life and living.

## ***Social Phobia***

People with this disorder are acutely sensitive and overly concerned with their own behavior. They no longer feel comfortable just being themselves, and develop a constant fear of others watching and judging them. This makes it difficult to develop normal relations and friendships with others. This phobia can start simply from some factor such as acne as a teenager, and progress to full blown agoraphobia.

### ***Specific Phobia***

This anxiety disorder involves a fear of something like tunnels, escalators, staircases, elevators, flying or highway driving.

These disorders tend to run in families.

### ***Generalized anxiety disorder***

This anxiety is focused on irrelevant matters and may develop beyond normal levels of caution or prudence. The sufferer is unable to relax, often feels irritated as well as developing hot flushes, nausea and other symptoms with their depression.

## Signs and Symptoms of Anxiety Disorders

Millions of Americans are victims of anxiety disorders. There are many different symptoms of these disorders. Different people experience different combinations of symptoms. Some symptoms may last through their lives while others may only occur at the time of an anxiety attack.

### Common Anxiety Disorder Signs and Symptoms

People suffering from anxiety disorder experience extensive tension. This tension can cause serious physical and emotional setbacks.

Common symptoms are –

- Excessive worry and increasing tension
- Pain and discomfort in their chests
- Muscular tension and body aches
- Fast, irregular heartbeat and breathlessness
- Dizziness and headaches
- Unable to sleep peacefully or difficulty when trying to fall asleep
- Inability to concentrate
- Fear of the situations linked to their bouts of anxiety and avoidance of such situations

- Nausea or diarrhea
- Overall tiredness and exhaustion
- Excessive sweating and feeling their palms becoming cold
- Hot flashes
- Trembling and twitching of their fingers and a tingling sensation in the legs
- Tension and stiffness in the back, shoulder, and neck regions
- Choking sensation and constant worry about terminal illness

Specific emotional symptoms of anxiety disorders include –

- Irritation and nervousness about the unknown
- Apprehensiveness towards almost everything
- Staying in seclusion and isolation because of fear
- Thinking that others are watching and noting your actions
- Overwhelming fear of death and consequent strong desire to escape to safer environments
- Constant jitteriness and living on the edge
- Fear of having to be in unfamiliar surroundings for any length of time
- Filling their own minds with fearful images
- Afraid of darkness and afraid to go out alone

You may experience these symptoms at any time of the day or night. Sometimes they occur repeatedly. However, you may find a suitable remedy to most of these symptoms with simple medications, therapies, meditation and other calming measures. They can provide immense relief.

Nevertheless, many try to take refuge in alcohol and drugs, which aggravate the situation further. They also hamper all medical treatments.

## Panic Disorder

The Panic Disorder is the most common ailment among Americans.

Some may experience a constant feeling of restlessness and anxiety while others have sudden panic attacks. This is Panic disorder.

During the attack, you develop an intense feeling of discomfort and fear.

### Symptoms of Panic Disorder

There are many different symptoms of panic disorder. You may experience these symptoms with little warning.

However, at least four of these symptoms are likely to be present if you have a true panic attack. The symptoms include –

1. Intense sweating and shaking of body
2. Breathlessness and gasping for breath
3. Fast and pounding heart
4. Uncomfortable feeling in the chest with pain
5. Choking sensation
6. Nausea and dizziness
7. Weird sensations in the muscles of hands and legs
8. Hot or cold flashes
9. Constant fear of death or impending doom



10. Unable to relate to your own personality

### **Diagnosis of Panic Disorder**

A single panic attack does not mean that you suffer from panic disorder. Most people experienced such attacks in their life. However, recurrent attacks over more than a month may be a reason for concern and indicate panic disorder, unless your symptoms and feelings are due to other factors, such as drug abuse, alcoholism, hyperthyroidism or excessive medication.

Or, if you constantly put yourself in danger (speeding, rock climbing), or doing something at which you would not like to be found out (cheating on your spouse), then you might have a good reason for your regular panic attacks, and not have panic disorder at all.

The best way to diagnose your ailment is to consult a reputable and physician that has experience in treating anxiety disorder and have them conduct a physical test on you.

This can pinpoint your panic disorder problem among the other causes of your anxiety.

### ***Is Treatment Necessary?***

The answer to that depends on the individual. If your life is out of control, but you are aware that you suffer panic attacks because of your lifestyle and will do whatever it takes to regain control, then the answer is no!

For those that don't know what's wrong or can't seem to get better,

no matter what they do, they should understand that panic disorder is a treatable ailment.

Left untreated, this disorder can assume alarming proportions and cause serious problems.

People suffering from panic disorder may live in constant fear of a panic attack. They feel very vulnerable and worry constantly. They also associate specific places with their panic attacks. They refuse to go anywhere near those places for fear of more attacks.

Limiting the places you will go, can often cause depression. It's a serious, negative influence on your relationships, jobs, and other social obligations. You shy away from people and crowds for fear of the unknown.

Therefore, if you want a normal life, appropriate and quick treatment can help you to get back in control your life.

## **Managing Panic**

If you suffer even one panic attack for which there isn't a rational explanation, it's time to see a doctor who might be able to rule out a pathological cause.

Having done that, there are a number of remedies you might want to try on your own before seeing a specialist.

Remember that a panic attack can occur at any time, but don't freak out about it. Brace yourself and take steps to prevent a possible attack.

Think about trying some of these ideas before looking to

professional help, guidance and medication.

Learn, and then practice, breathing exercises everyday; and use them whenever you feel that you need them. Deep breathing helps to prevent, or lower, the intensity of your attack. It also helps bring down your stress levels, which is a very common cause for panic attacks.

Deep breathing may provide excellent relief. Here's how it's done:

1. Breathe in through your nose and fill your lungs
2. Hold your breath 2-3 seconds or more
3. Let your breath out slowly but with some pressure, through your tightly compressed lips.

Your behavioral therapist will teach you more relaxation therapies. Relax your tense nerves by distracting yourself when you feel panic rising in you. Do something, anything constructive. Even reading a book may help you.

- ✓ Read about your condition and think about the advice given.
- ✓ Read for pleasure.
- ✓ Read to cry. Crying can be very therapeutic.
- ✓ And get some exercise. Nothing helps defeat anxiety and panic like activity, the more productive the better.

## Social Anxiety Disorder

Social Anxiety Disorder patients feel extremely self-consciousness and anxious in normal social situations of everyday life. Different patients display different levels of self-consciousness or the other common symptoms of social anxiety disorder. This disorder is the same as 'Social Phobia'.

Anyone displaying social anxiety disorder will show;

- An inferiority complex: the feeling that everybody else is better than them
- A feeling that everyone is constantly watching and judging them and their actions
- A feeling that you will make mistakes and everyone will notice
- A feeling that they will humiliate or embarrass themselves

You may have a few or all of these feelings. You may also develop an acute sense of fear in social situations. This anxiousness leads to a pounding heart, blushing, sweating, stammering, trembling and nausea. Such intense anxiousness generally leads to further embarrassing situations.

Therefore, people with social anxiety disorder shy away from public places and keep themselves within a few select groups of friends. They prefer to distance themselves from public places and feel most uncomfortable at restaurants, or using a telephone in front of other

people.

This continuous seclusion could prove disastrous to your job, social or school activities.

### ***Occurrence***

Social anxiety disorder is a common ailment in the United States. Around 3.7% of the total population has this problem. The percentage of women sufferers is higher than that of men. You can see this trait start and develop from early childhood, into adolescence and, later, into adulthood.

Normally, people over the age of twenty-five do not develop this disorder.

Social anxiety disorder is often the result of depression or other nervous disorders. Additionally, if you have a serious addiction to drugs and alcohol, you may develop such a disorder.

### **Treatment**

It is essential to treat social anxiety disorder just like other anxiety disorder. Prompt and regular treatment can deliver good results with relief from your social anxiety disorder. The most common treatment is a combination of cognitive-behavioral therapy and medication.

### ***Cognitive-behavioral therapy***

This therapy aims to change your thinking pattern. You identify the specific thoughts leading to your anxiety or fear. This therapy teaches you to control the flow of your thoughts and to restrict the

occurrence of repetitive and irrational thoughts in all types of situations.

Further, this therapy emphasizes increasing your self-confidence, self-esteem and optimism while reducing the incidence of fear. Therapists often urge behavioral therapy in groups, with other patients that have the same symptoms.

However, some may not feel comfortable in practicing such therapy with many others. For them, one-on-one sessions with their therapist may be more successful.

Keep in mind that you can (and should be) getting all the rest you need, be eating well, taking vitamins (especially B1), exercising regularly and keeping productive.

Clean your house. If this seems overwhelming, clean a room.

Medications can be effective at treating social anxiety disorders. Depending on the intensity of your disorder, doctors could advise you to take medications for few days or longer. These medications are used in combination with the cognitive-behavioral therapy.

Common medications include selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, benzodiazepines, monoamine oxidase inhibitor antidepressants and beta-blockers. These block and reduce your anxiety levels.

The best treatment is a combination of the behavioral treatment with necessary psychotherapy. Therapists expose you to various stressful and anxiety-producing situations. They guide you and your emotions through these situations during treatment. Most therapists

have the view that medication should be the last choice of treatment. Behavioral therapy can prove very beneficial for those who are experiencing social anxiety disorder.

## Generalized Anxiety Disorder

Generalized anxiety disorder is a common disorder with more occurrences in women than in men. Around two to three percent of the total population suffers from this disorder. This anxiety syndrome makes you anxious for no apparent reason. You constantly dread some sort of impending doom.

The cause could be anything or nothing. Although the cause or source of the anxiety may not appear very serious to others, it greatly hampers your normal routine and performance in all spheres.

Additional stress, like a job loss, financial constraints, divorce or death of a close family member or friend may all contribute to amplifying the disorder.

### ***Symptoms***

Generalized anxiety disorder exhibits many different symptoms with varied intensities. These symptoms could occur in isolation or in combination. Some of them are -

- An edgy feeling with impatience
- Unable to concentrate; becoming easily distracted
- Muscular tension with headaches and body aches
- Tiring very easily
- Irritated feeling all the time



- Excessive sweating with regular bouts of breathlessness
- Having problems with falling and remaining asleep
- Stomach ache with diarrhea
- Trembling; fast heart palpitations
- Nausea

You should have any three symptoms for major part of a six-month period before doctors categorize you as having generalized anxiety disorder.

### ***Diagnosis of the Disorder***

If you remain anxious, without any solid backing for your anxiety, it is best to consult a physician.

A thorough analysis of all symptoms can help doctors diagnose your true problem, and they will make certain that you do not suffer from any other major medical conditions like hypertension, cardiac problems, thyroid disease, drug or alcohol abuse, hypoglycemia or depression.

### ***Treatment Options***

Treatments for this disorder include tranquilizers, antidepressants and psychotherapy sessions. A few of the antidepressant drugs that give relief are:

1. selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors like sertraline and flextime;

2. Tranquilizers, like clonazepam and benzodiazepines help reduce symptoms of the disorder. However, the use of benzodiazepines should be for a short period, as continued use could make you dependent on the drug. Withdrawal should be gradual.

Psychotherapy and cognitive behavioral therapy sessions may help you to understand the nature and occurrence of the symptoms, and thereby combat them effectively.

Different relaxation techniques also benefit many sufferers.

### ***Prevention is a Better Option***

Generalized anxiety disorder is primarily due to a tendency to be hyperactive. Therefore, follow these tips to help to maintain your calm attitude:

Put past tribulations in your life in perspective and start fresh.

Whenever you start to feel anxious, control your emotions by locating the cause for your anxiety. This can help you address the problem and find its solution, thereby calming your nerves.

Manage your feelings of anxiousness. Try the breathing exercises. Avoid anxiety by involving your mind with a hobby, reading, puzzles, or by going for a brisk walk.

Eat a balanced diet, exercise regularly, take enough rest and set aside time to relax.

## Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

Obsessive-compulsive disorder is a type of anxiety disorder with characteristic compulsive thoughts and repetitive behaviors. These thoughts translate into obsessive actions, which often disrupt your normal life.

Until recently, doctors thought childhood experiences to be the main cause for Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). However, recent researches indicate neurological factors to be the main cause.

### Common Symptoms

This is a mostly a chronic disorder, although you can have temporary bouts of the symptoms. If you have severe OCD, you will not be able to work normally at home or office. You are aware that your obsessions and compulsions are unrealistic. But, you are unable to control them.

Symptoms for OCD are primarily **obsessions and compulsive rituals**. Obsessions differ from person to person but remain persistent and invoke anxiety. Obsessions normally concentrate on the following:

Constant fear of contamination. You feel that you could spread germs or diseases. You feel that having sexual relations with your spouse is dirty.

You have a constant fear of violence, or need to make yourself or your family ever more safe. You feel that the locking or security of your home is insufficient and intruders could get in to harm you.

You feel that you might lose your control and cause unintentional harm to somebody, or behave abnormally in front of others.

You have an obsession for everything to be perfect and that there should be no compromise anywhere. You get upset if ever there is any disruption in the smallest detail.

## **Compulsive Rituals**

OCD sufferers develop compulsive rituals. Some of them are –

- Repetitive washing of hands
- Repetitive checking of locks and stoves
- Refusing to shake hands or use doorknobs
- Incessant arranging of clothes in a particular order
- Compulsorily repeating a particular prayer or word

## ***Treatments***

Medications and Behavior therapy provide relief from OCD.

Medications include the use of selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitors like Paxil, Luvox, Sertraline and Prozac.

Follow your doctor's advice.

Psychotherapy sometimes involves the compulsorily performance of the obsessed actions so that the patient feels in control rather than compelled.

Therapists may expose you to the anxiety creating situations.

However, they *prevent* you from performing the compulsive rituals.

Regular practice sessions of increasing duration can help you to overcome your compulsive disorder.

Another way of overcoming OCD is to practice clenching your fists or deep breathing to let the thought pass away. Distracting your mind to other thoughts and hobbies can offer excellent relief from your compulsive obsessions.

Sometimes this works, but sometimes one compulsive behavior only gets replaced with another.

## Specific Phobia

Specific phobias are anxiety disorders. These phobias are nothing less than intense fear of a particular or specific situation or object. Often, these are not dangerous situations or objects. But, you react adversely to it.

You may have a fear of flying in planes or visiting the dentist. You might avoid driving on highways or prefer not to use elevators.

More than six million American adults have this disorder. Specific phobia disorder is more common in women than in men. For some, this disorder starts in childhood and continues into adolescence and adulthood. Some develop it in adulthood, although such occurrences are rare.

There is not yet a particular cause that is identified for specific phobia disorder.

### ***Is Specific Phobia The Same as Fear?***

No, Specific phobia is very different from normal fear. The phobia of a particular thing is very intense. The humorous part of specific phobia is that you may laugh at your fears when not confronted by them.

However, you are a transformed person when in the actual situation. Therefore, you do your best and go to unreasonable lengths to stay away from the situation, or anything that could cause the situation to occur. Some phobias, such as a fear of high places, generally have no impact on a person's daily life. If,

however, if you are, say, terrified of shoes, then living a normal life may become problematic.

### ***How to Diagnose Your Specific Phobia***

Specific phobias affect every age people and are not a psychiatric disorder. The following characteristics might help you to identify your fear as a Specific Phobia:

The fear factor is overwhelming and you experience fear even just at the mention of the object or situation

Panic arises and escalates to high levels when in the actual situation.

You avoid confronting the situation even at the cost of interfering with your normal routines. You may spend many hours thinking of the situation.

Astonishingly, you are aware of the fact that all your specific phobias or fears are irrational.

### **Types of Specific Phobia**

Specific phobia is usually of the following five types -

1. Fear of part of the natural environment; storms, heights or water
2. Fear of animals
3. Fear of situations like elevators, planes or enclosed places
4. Fear of injury and blood or injections

## 5. Fear of events like choking, illness, and vomiting

### **Treatment**

Treatments include alternative therapy and medications. Simple medications may release your tension and help to reduce your anxiety levels. This restricts the development of anxious situations.

Medications include small doses of alprazolam or clonazepam. Antidepressants may also provide relief.

Alternative therapies include hypnotherapy, acupuncture, massage, immersive virtual reality, energy balance approaches and applied tension. All these therapies function with the sole aim of relaxing your nerves and muscles while developing deep breathing techniques.

During an applied tension therapy session, therapists instruct you to tense your muscles to increase your blood pressure. This helps stop your tendency to faint at the sight of blood. Similarly, massage and acupuncture may ease your muscular tension, which prevents fear psychosis erupting in simple situations.

Sometimes, therapists expose you to your particular fear, or situation, to overcome your phobia. This is called immersive virtual reality. Visualization, or virtual realization of the situation, with the help of a therapist, may help you to overcome these specific phobias. The process is divided into simple, manageable steps, and you do not continue on to the next step until your anxiety level for the step you are on is within your control.

Such therapies and treatments require you to cooperate extensively



with your therapist for positive results.

## Post-traumatic Stress Disorder

Post-traumatic stress disorder develops *after* the occurrence of the traumatic event that is the cause of it. Although you may not have been in the actual dangerous situation, nor have been injured, you could still develop Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This anxiety disorder is common among soldiers, terrorist attack victims, victims of sexual molestation and rape and survivors of natural disasters like earthquakes and floods, or accident victims.

Post-traumatic stress disorder causes you to keep replaying the events over and over in your mind. The memories may be disturbing and, sometimes, emotionally and physically paralyzing . You may experience nightmares and often do not sleep well.

This anxiety often induces panic attacks and feelings of guilt and paranoia. These feelings could lead to depression and consequent suicide.

### ***Symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder***

Symptoms of this disorder may develop within a month of the occurrence of the event, and last for up to three months. In some people, it could develop soon after the trauma. This variation is called acute stress disorder. Sometimes, it could develop only years after the event.

Common symptoms are:

- Regular repetition of the traumatic events and memories

- Avoidance of anything that is symbolic of the event or likely to revive memories of the traumas.
- You become numb and uninterested in important situations.
- You are unable to recall parts of the event.
- You become worried or anxious in simple, normal situations and cannot concentrate on anything.
- You are unable to sleep peacefully, and wake intermittently.
- Feelings of insecurity, apprehension, and fear of the unknown.

### ***Treatment***

Treatment of PTSD is essential to reduce occurrence of the symptoms and prevent further problems. Common treatment options for PTSD include antidepressants and effective professional counseling. Further treatment includes proper education and adequate support.

Effective treatment helps you to feel safe, and develops your sense of belonging. It also prevents further occurrence of symptoms or other conditions like depression, alcoholism or drug abuse. Tranquilizers may help subdue your emotions and help bring you to a manageable level.

Treatment sessions for PTSD patients are normally on an outpatient basis, although severe cases require hospitalization. From three to six months of professional counseling may be necessary to bring you to a normal state and capable of living a normal life.

Behavioral therapy for PTSD concentrates on changing your thinking patterns. Sometimes, therapists expose you to similar situations to recover from the trauma, by getting you to realize that the danger is past.

Sometimes, it is necessary to involve your full family in the treatment.

### **Self-Help**

You can help yourself by maintaining good health with the help of a balanced diet, regular exercise and sleeping adequately - for eight to nine hours at a time. Also, avoid alcohol and drugs as a way to help you come over your trauma and lead a normal life.

Self-support groups also help.

## **Agoraphobia**

This phobia is characterized by panic or anticipatory anxiety and avoidance of open or public places, due to an abnormal fear of being helpless in a situation from which escape may be difficult or embarrassing.

Agoraphobic individuals try to avoid fearful situations. Some of them lead seemingly normal lives as they distance themselves from anxious situations. Some others refuse to move out of their home. This is a difficult situation, as it hampers normal social and employment routines.

Agoraphobia is not as common as other anxiety disorders. It affects less than one percent of the total population. However, its occurrence is twice as often in women as in men. It normally develops during your twenties.

### **Diagnosis**

Doctors can diagnose agoraphobia by a thorough examination and evaluation. There may be no need for laboratory tests. Doctors, however, may check for severe medical conditions like psychological disorders, traumas and others.

### ***Symptoms of Agoraphobia***

- Fear of being alone
- Fear of being in unfamiliar situations, or surroundings
- Fear of doing anything embarrassing in public places

- Refusing to go out of their home
- Feeling of being dependent on others
- Feeling that your body and environment is unreal and imaginary
- Agitated feelings with twitching and trembling
- Excessive sweating and becoming breathless
- Dizziness and fainting
- Chest pain, fast heartbeats, nausea, vomiting
- Stomach upsets
- Unconnected thoughts with fear of death

### ***Treatment Options***

Agoraphobia treatment options include medications, therapies or a combination of both. Normally, medications help subdue your hyperactive emotions and therapies help you to develop your abilities to combat further rise of emotions.

Severe cases of agoraphobia may take years to resolve.

### ***Medications***

Antidepressant medicines like alprazolam, paroxetine, sertraline and flextime may be useful for inhibiting the production of serotonin.

### ***Therapies***

Pharmacotherapy is a type of therapy that is aimed at reducing the

frequency and severity of the panic and anxiety associated with agoraphobia. You slowly realize that there was nothing to be afraid of, and try to venture into previously fearful locations and situations. This helps to overcome your agoraphobic disorder.

The combination of antidepressants and therapies like psychotherapy and pharmacotherapy, can provide faster and better relief from the symptoms of agoraphobia than was previously available.

The relapse rate in such treatments is very low.

### ***Psychodynamic Treatment***

This type of treatment involves talking sessions with you and the therapist.

The therapist listens to you and tries to find the reasons for your emotional disturbances. This, hopefully, gives you time to have, or gain, valuable insight. Talking helps to reassure you; you feel lighter and better. You talk about the long buried thoughts and fears in your mind, and find solace in the words of the therapist.

## Claustrophobia

Claustrophobia is a type of anxiety disorder that causes fear of closed and confined spaces. Claustrophobics feel they are suffocating in trains, elevators, closed auditoriums, theaters, aircrafts and amongst crowds.

Claustrophobia is very common. Many people are unaware of their own claustrophobia.

### Causes of Claustrophobia

This anxiety disorder could be due to some traumatic event in your childhood or could develop because of frequent panic attacks. The real cause of claustrophobia is locked in your subconscious mind. As human beings, we all have some things in common, including having been carried in our mother's wombs. If mom was upset, threatened, or injured at this time, Jr. might become claustrophobic.

You might have watched a television show that scared you. Or, you might have let your mind dwell on things in life that terrify you. Putting yourself in a position where you feel you cannot get free, can cause all kinds of panic symptoms.

Once you have thought of, or seen, these fearsome things, your subconscious mind labels the incident or occurrence as a perceived danger, and your brain immediately reacts to it.

Your emotions rise and you feel fear and tension.

Some people experience claustrophobia almost all the time and do



not need any specific triggers or stimuli.

### ***Symptoms of Claustrophobia***

- Nausea, dizziness, and fainting
- Intense sweating with increased heart rate
- Tense breathing and shaking of your body
- Fear of illness, or infliction of harm

### ***Treatment***

Treat claustrophobia with competent care and therapy. Medications and therapies that may hold the key to claustrophobia include antidepressants and tranquilizers that aim to reduce the intensity of claustrophobia.

Therapies may provide better relief from claustrophobia.

**Cognitive behavior therapy** can help change your attitudes and mindset regarding incidents that can cause such anxiety.

**Flooding** is a type of 'exposure' treatment that confine you to closed spaces. You slowly realize that there is nothing to be afraid of and may get over your disorder.

**Counter-conditioning** therapy induces you to develop specific techniques to exercise control over your fear-inducing emotions. Simple breathing techniques and mind relaxation techniques help to achieve this control.

Normally, treatment sessions extend to bi-weekly sessions for eight

to ten weeks. These treatments are on an outpatient basis. Only severe cases should need in-patient treatment.

## Anxiety Disorders in Children

**A**nxiety disorders can be present in children and adolescents.

Sometimes, anxiety disorders start from a young age and manifest in adulthood. Often, traumatic or serious incidents in childhood are the main cause for anxiety disorders later in life. Normally, children with such disorders are uneasy and fear, or worry, too much about almost everything.

These disorders are often the cause for many problems like a low-level of self-confidence, irregular attendance at school, the inability to complete school or the inability to mix with their peer group. Sometimes, these children find refuge in drugs and alcohol.

### ***Occurrence***

You may find signs of anxiety disorders in children between the ages of six and eight. During this period, children evolve from being babies. They do not believe in imaginary creatures as much and most have lost their fear of darkness. They give more importance to school.

If your child shows undue concern and worry about school performance, has a difficult time making friends or is listless or apathetic, it may be time to investigate.

Talk to your child and talk to their teacher. Take your child to see the school counselor and, if you are still concerned, pay for professional help.

These concerns and worries could carry forward into adolescence,

and beyond.

Youngsters between the ages of nine and seventeen often experience all kinds of anxiety. Most of this is quite natural. Life is challenging.

The percentage that suffers this kind is higher in girls than in boys. Overall, 13% of children are at a risk for anxiety disorders. Some children exhibit additional disorders, such as depression, body mutilation as well as a number of physical ailments.

### ***Types of Anxiety Disorders in Children***

Anxiety disorders in children may be of the following types -

**Separation Anxiety Disorder:** This disorder is more common among young children as they are unable to bear separation from parents. Young ones cling to you at the school entrance and cry unrelentingly.

These children generally become fine after a time. Some of these children could develop symptoms of withdrawal and depression if not handled properly at this time. If your child does not quickly adapt, maybe you should consider seeking the school counselor's advice and find out what it is that you are doing, or not doing, that keeps little Jr. so upset.

**Generalized Anxiety Disorder:** This disorder is characterized by excessive worry by your child about normal, daily activities. These children remain tense and anxious about their academic performance, daily attendance and schoolwork, sports, or even being on time. Physical symptoms could be imaginary pains and

discomfort. You have to offer extensive reassurance to such children.

**Phobias:** Adolescents sometimes develop excessive and unrealistic views, or attitudes, concerning specific places, objects and situations. These phobias could center on physical features like rain, animals, heights or may develop as emotional anxiety, like peer acceptance.

Attempts by these children to avoid stressful, or compromising situations may lead to severe disruptions in your life as well as theirs.

**Post-traumatic Stress Disorder:** This disorder sets in because of traumatic incidents like child molestation, physical or sexual abuse, violence, natural disasters or other frightening happenings. The children find it difficult to sleep, and get a fright out of simple things.

**Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder:** This disorder means that children or adolescents indulge in repetitive behavior and obsessive thinking. It is quite disturbing to witness.

**Panic Disorder:** Panic attacks occur in children and adolescents without any obvious cause. These attacks consist of excessive sweating, nausea, dizziness and a feeling of impending death or disaster. The overall effect of the attack may be so intense that children fear another attack and, therefore, remain tense and reclusive.

## ***Treatments***

**Behavioral therapy:** Children learn to combat their fears by changing their behavioral and thinking patterns. Counseling sessions with family members can provide additional support and encouragement.

**Relaxation techniques:** Simple relaxation techniques, like deep breathing, yoga, meditation and regular physical exercises help children acclimatize their bodies to a regular routine and pattern. This reduces muscular tension and stress, helping them to relax and take things in a lighter vein.

**Parent Training:** Parents that notice changes in behavioral patterns of their children and adolescents can seek the help of counselors and health care providers. Books and the Internet may provide ample information.

**Laughter, Diet, Sleep, Constructive Activity, Vigorous Exercise,** Loving parents and a non-threatening environment all contribute to reducing the level of a person's anxiety.

**Medication:** A very small minority of children may actually need medication for treatment of persistent symptoms of their anxiety disorders. This is a matter of extensive debate. Do not make this decision lightly.

## Recent Research on Anxiety Disorders

Scientists regularly research the causes, effects, medications, treatment and prevention of anxiety disorders.

They try to identify the role of genes in the development of such disorders and probe into the effects of varied factors like diet, pollution, sleep deprivation, psychological trauma and physical stress on children in the formation and elimination of anxiety disorders.

### ***Genes and Anxiety Disorders***

Not all people that become exposed to traumas develop Post-traumatic stress disorder. This might be because of their genetic makeup, the child's basic personality or the way the child was raised, or some other factors.

The brain is the center and source of much that is not yet explained or understood, and studies are ongoing.

What is now known is that the Amygdala and Hippocampus of the brain play a significant role in such disorders.

The amygdala, located centrally in the brain, is the communicator between the brain parts that receive sensory signals and those that process the signals.

It immediately alerts the brain if there are any signals of fear or anxiety. The amygdala also stores memories of such fears, and the hippocampus links fear into the type of stressful or frightening

events that caused it.

These memories remain embedded in the hippocampus.

Recent research has shown that trauma victims and patients with similar anxiety disorders have a smaller hippocampus. This smaller size may be the cause for broken memories of the traumatic event and, therefore, inadequate comprehension of the event. These disjointed memories appear as flashbacks and cause anxiety.

Other research suggests that trauma is perhaps the cause of a smaller hippocampus, as well as the reason for disjointed memories and flashbacks.

### ***Progress through Research***

Armed with such knowledge, scientists and researchers are trying to devise suitable treatments for anxiety disorders. Drugs and medications to block the fear responses in neurotransmitters may prove to be a boon.

Similarly, research to find the means of increasing the generation of brain cells and neurons in the hippocampus. This can increase its size and thereby, reduce the incidence of disjointed memories caused by traumas. It can help you understand and deal effectively with such traumas, so that they do not adversely affect you.

Researchers are also trying to identify the cause of obsessive-compulsive disorder and the effect of medications and therapies as effective treatments. These patients normally display poor physical and mental health.

Additionally, scientists are trying to identify the effects of such



medications on adolescents and children who have hyperactivity disorders.

## Part-III: Diagnosis of Anxiety Disorders

### How to Know If You Have an Anxiety Disorder

**A**nxiety is a common emotion and may increase your motivation.

Your anxious feelings about your success or survival motivate you to perform better and bring in better results. However, this anxiety sometimes develops into a disorder if you worry excessively and attach unrealistic feelings to it.

Anxiety disorder is an ailment affecting more than 13% of the total population of the United States. You may have an anxiety disorder if you exhibit excessive intense fear, panic, stress or worry.

You remain paranoid about everything. It becomes difficult for you to concentrate on anything, and even getting sound sleep is difficult.

You lose your appetite and are unable to relax.

Some people don't lose their appetite but eat excessively to calm their nerves.

Additionally, you could experience many physical symptoms; sweating, stomach disorders, fast heart rate, body aches and immense stress.

You may constantly feel that disaster could befall you at anytime.

### Diagnosis of the Disorder

If you feel that you are unnecessarily anxious about everything, it is

best to consult a physician. A thorough physical check-up with an additional check-up by a mental health professional can diagnose any actual ailment in you.

Anxiety disorders often occur in concurrence with drug addiction, alcoholism and depression. Therefore, professionals try to assess the actual cause of your anxiety and then provide the necessary treatment.

Medical help is better than self-analysis of your condition.

## How to Diagnosis Anxiety Disorders

Diagnosing anxiety disorders is a very daunting task. Most of the symptoms and conditions overlap other medical conditions. Sometimes, your anxiety attack could be the result of some other psychological factor and you might feel that you have anxiety disorder.

If you often experience anxious feelings, consult a general physician. The physician, after making sure that you are pathologically healthy, may refer you to a mental health specialist.

Anxiety disorders are very similar to many neurological conditions like depression, epilepsy and other psychological problems. Symptoms of anxiety disorders are almost the same as ailments of the heart and lungs, hyperthyroidism, hypoglycemia and diabetes.

Women often experience anxiousness during menopause. Certain drugs that are used for treatment of diabetes, high blood pressure and thyroid disorders cause restlessness and anxiety as side-effects. Therefore, it is important to rule out the presence of all such diseases or side effects of medications.

Doctors need to conduct a full physical examination. They also need to know the full history of your ailments or any other medical conditions. You have to give all the details. You have to tell your habits like the use of drugs, excessive drinking or intake of caffeine. You have to tell all your personal woes such as family disturbances, divorce or any other stressful changes and events in your life.

## Tests and Diagnosis

Doctors use specific tests to determine the intensity levels and frequency of occurrence of your anxiousness, like the Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale or the Beck Anxiety Inventory and others.

These tests rate the intensity of your symptoms. Some of these tests consist of multiple-choice questions and answers. You can choose to write your responses or answer them verbally. These tests provide doctors with clues about your disorder that help them decide the course of treatment that will be best for your condition.

The effect of most anxiety disorders depend on the duration of the symptoms, its severity, and any other accompanying behavioral symptoms. Scrutiny of all factors may help doctors to identify your particular type of anxiety disorder. Laboratory tests are not necessary for diagnosis of anxiety problems.

Normally, the symptoms of anxiety disorder need to be present for the major part of a given six-month observation period. These symptoms should be so intense that they affect your normal living extensively and you are unable to lead a normal life.

You may even have to take leave from school or work.

### ***Symptoms that may Indicate Your Particular Disorder***

A few or the symptoms necessary for diagnosis of anxiety disorder are feelings of restlessness and irritability, extreme fatigue and tiredness, sleep disturbances with flashbacks and nightmares, difficulty in concentration and muscular tension and aches.

Different types of anxiety disorders exhibit varied symptoms. Panic

disorders could exhibit symptoms of intense sweating, rapid pulse rate, choking, nausea, breathlessness, chest pain and numbness.

Specific symptoms are indicative of classifiable disorders, and have specific treatments or remedies.

If you have agoraphobia, you would not like to venture out alone. If you develop claustrophobia, you feel that you are suffocating in any enclosed area. If you suffer from obsessive-compulsive disorder, you are never sure of anything and compulsively check for your safety in your surroundings.

The correct diagnosis of your particular disorder can help you receive the best available treatment for the correct problem so that there is more chance that you can be free of your disorder.

## Part-IV: Prevention of Anxiety Disorders

### 18. Tips to Avoid Anxiety Disorders

**Relax:** Relaxation is a powerful tonic for your frayed nerves.

Relaxation can be in the form of –

- ✓ Deep breathing
- ✓ Yoga
- ✓ Meditation
- ✓ Muscle relaxation

Deep breathing involves taking in lots of air, holding your breath for few seconds and then exhaling. Regular practice of deep breathing may lower your anxiety levels extensively.

Selective yoga postures, techniques and routines exercise your muscles while meditation helps you to control the flow of emotions within you. You may develop higher concentration levels and can remain calmer even in the tensest situations.

Muscular relaxation requires you to hold a single muscle, or group of muscles, tightly and then relax slowly. Stretching muscles can reduce muscular tension and provide relief from body aches.

**Worry:** Assign a particular time and place to worry about your problems. Think of all your disturbing thoughts and try to find apt solutions to your problems. Think and plan for the present, letting the future take care of itself.

**Sleep:** Develop a regular sleeping pattern. Go to bed and get up at particular times. Make this your routine. That helps you to fall asleep without anxiety. Eight hours sleep is sufficient. Do not oversleep.

**Exercise:** Develop and practice a regular exercise pattern. This keeps you fit and energetic, doing away with unnecessary thoughts and anxieties. Swimming, jogging and other aerobic exercises provide a good workout.

**Avoid alcohol, caffeine and drugs.** Although these relax you for the moment, they increase the anxiety symptoms.

**Confront Anxiousness:** Build up your courage to confront the feelings that lead to anxieties in the past. Deal with these thoughts and analyze how to overcome them. This boosts your confidence and you become more optimistic about confronting other anxious feeling that may arise within you.

**Counting:** Simple backward counting from 100 to zero can calm your tense nerves and muscles. When anxiety starts to build, practice this technique to develop and improve your focus.

**Fear Study:** Study and understand the intensity of your fear and its escalation. Accept the fear and do not run away. Instead, face it stoically and bravely. You will soon overcome your fear.

**Professional Help:** Always consult your doctor or counselor for help with dealing with your fear and anxiety problems. Anxiety may depress or scare you, but cannot cause you any harm. This reassuring thought helps you to overcome fear. Counselors provide guidance to cope with your feelings and express them properly at



the proper places. These techniques drive away your anxiety.

**Identify Disturbing Thoughts and Places:** While in a calm mood and safe surroundings, analyze what causes anxiety in you. Thereafter, try to find solutions to your anxious feelings.

If adherence to these solutions helps you overcome your anxiety, you are on your way to overcoming your anxiety disorder.

**Support Groups:** Form support groups with friends and others who have similar anxiety problems. Discussing each other's problems and supporting each other can build up a strong sense of support. It also boosts your feeling of security. No matter what the disorder, you are not alone.

**Family:** Your family members could provide extensive support in your anxious moments. Talk over your problems and discuss them with your family members. Discussing them can lift a heavy burden from your shoulders. You feel light and happy. You do not feel as anxious any more.

**Assertiveness:** Become assertive without becoming aggressive. Say what you mean and allow others to do the same. Aggressiveness causes tension and anxiety. Deal calmly with problems and face facts with a cool mind. Passive and defensive techniques aggravate anxiety disorders. Therefore, avoid these.

**Self-confidence and Self-belief:** Develop these virtues and you are ready to confront any situation of fear or anxiety. Assure yourself that you have the ability to tackle everything and come out successful. This self-assertion and mental boost can help you overcome all your anxieties and fears.

## **Part-V: Treatment of Anxiety Disorders**

### **Treatment Options for Anxiety Disorders**

**I**t is possible to cure your anxiety disorders that occur due to certain physical and psychological disturbances.

A proper diagnosis can help to identify the exact type of anxiety disorder in you. This helps in administering the correct treatment. Anxiety disorders also occur in concurrence with addictions like drugs and alcohol.

Sometimes, different medical conditions like depression, high blood pressure, thyroid ailments and hypertension exhibit similar symptoms to some anxiety disorders.

Therefore, you have to disclose all your habits and symptoms to your doctor. This helps the doctor to arrive at the correct conclusion of your disorder. You then have to undergo treatments to cure your other coexisting conditions before taking treatments for your anxiety disorders.

If you have already had treatment for anxiety disorders in the past, tell the details to your doctor before taking new treatments. Details about medications, their dosages and side effects, therapies and the number of sittings, or any other form of treatment is essential to analyze their effects.

Often, any single treatment may not deliver the required result. You may need a combination of treatments for anxiety disorders.

## Treatment Options

Broadly speaking, treatment options for anxiety disorders are therapies and medications. You could benefit from a combination of therapies or therapies and medications. Normally, doctors start with a low dosage and a few therapy sessions while they observe the effects. Then, they they increase the dosages or duration and number of therapy sessions in accord with the results that you showed.

Side effects of medications are a common occurrence. So, doctors carefully watch and study the extent of side effects in anxiety disorder treatments.

Sometimes, your body accepts the side effects over a few dosages and they gradually reduce. If the side effects are severe or prove problematic, your doctor will advise you to stop the medication.

## Therapies

**Behavioral therapy:** This therapy checks and controls your behavioral actions. Different techniques help you to combat and let go of your unwanted behavior. These behaviors are the symptoms of your anxiety disorders. By controlling the symptoms, the disorder is directly addressed and anxiety diminished.

Doctors prescribe **diaphragmatic breathing** to reduce your anxiety levels. This type of breathing exercise involves practicing the taking of slow, deep breaths. During your anxiety attacks, you normally take very fast, short breaths. This leads to increase in the rate of your heartbeats and a feeling of dizziness. The regular practice of diaphragmatic breathing may reduces incidence of rapid

breathing during your anxiety attacks.

Another technique that is used in behavioral therapy is **exposure therapy**. Doctors expose you to the very facts that frighten and cause you anxiety. You may feel scared of certain places and people. Doctors ask you to confront these very places with a support group or your therapist. This helps to alleviate your fears and you recover from your anxiety attacks. You may face these fears initially through tapes and pictures. Thereafter, you face the feared situation in reality. However, you do not fear it anymore.

**Cognitive-behavioral therapy:** This behavioral therapy treatment teaches you different reactions to your anxiety. You learn to think differently and thereby benefit from reduction in anxiety attacks.

Normally, you experience a little dizziness during a panic attack. This dizziness increases your anxiety levels as you feel that you are going to die soon. You feel that you might have a heart attack. However, doctors teach you to change the pattern of your thinking.

Doctors advise you to think that this dizziness is a temporary phenomenon and you will soon overcome it. This change in thinking has a huge effect on your anxiety. Your self-reassurance reduces your anxieties and you soon feel better and relaxed. You do not feel that people are constantly watching or judging you.

**Psychotherapy:** This therapy involves talking with a professional psychologist, psychiatrist or counselor. During such sessions, these professionals try to identify the root cause of your anxiety. It could be due to a certain specific incident in your childhood or adolescence. These sessions reveal the true cause of your anxiety. Thereafter, psychotherapists suggest suitable behavioral therapy or

medications.

**Psychodynamic psychotherapy:** This is a different type of therapy treatment for treating your anxiety disorders. These disorders occur due to certain mental conflicts. Your mind experiences many different negative feelings like fear, panic, insecurity and the like. All these factors unconsciously lower your confidence levels. This therapy aims at increasing your self-confidence and removing all negativity from your mind.

### ***Medications***

Medications do not provide a complete cure for your anxiety disorders. However, they deliver good results in combination with relevant therapies to improve your anxiety problems and help you to lead a normal life. Common medications for anxiety disorders are beta-blockers, anti-anxiety drugs and antidepressants.

**Beta-Blockers:** These treat the physical symptoms accompanying an anxiety attack. If you fear public places and talking with people, a beta-blocker like propranolol can help you to keep this fear at bay. You do not encounter any shivering or trembling.

**Antidepressants:** These medications are primarily in use for treating depression symptoms. These antidepressants are also useful for treating anxiety disorders. They begin taking effect from the very first dose. However, you need a continuous dosage over a month and a half for you to get the total effect and gradual fading away of the negative symptoms of your condition.

Doctors start you on small dosages and gradually increase to the full dosage.

Common antidepressants include **selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRI)**. These have their effect by altering the levels of serotonin in your brain. Serotonin helps in communication between the brain cells. Common SSRIs include sertraline, fluoxetine, escitalopram and paroxetine. Common side effects of SSRIs include slight dizziness and nausea, which disappears over time. Some patients experience sexual dysfunction. Doctors then prescribe other SSRIs.

**Tricyclics:** These antidepressants work similarly to SSRIs. These may prove very effective at treating obsessive-compulsive disorders. Some tricyclics include imipramine, clomipramine and others. Side effects of these antidepressants may include dry mouth, dizziness and weight gain.

You can overcome these side effects by changing dosages or changing to different tricyclics.

**MAOIs:** These are monoamine oxidase inhibitors. Common MAOIs are tranylcypromine, phenelzine and isocarboxazid. Many food items, beverages and certain herbal supplements react strongly with MAOIs. You should avoid cheese, red wine, birth control pills and non-prescribed pain relievers while on MAOIs. These reactions could lead to high blood pressure, stiffness of muscles, excessive sweating and even life-threatening conditions.

### ***Anti-Anxiety Drugs***

These drugs can tackle your anxieties and do not seem to cause many side effects. Benzodiazepines with high potencies may be beneficial. Use them for short terms because being dependent on

this medication is not advisable. Only Panic Anxiety Disorder patients can take this for up to a year continuously. You need to take these drugs continuously for two weeks to receive the positive effects. Common benzodiazepines include lorazepam, clonazepam, alprazolam and buspirone. Withdrawal of anti-anxiety drugs should be gradual. Otherwise, it could lead to a relapse of the symptoms.

## How to Make Treatment for Anxiety Disorders More Effective

Instead of medication, or professional therapy and before even considering medication or professional therapy, find and become a member of a support group.

Talking about your anxieties with other sufferers can greatly relieve stress. Helping others will help you. This is an opportunity to actually laugh at yourself, put your problems into perspective and to help others while helping yourself.

Who better to talk to than a fellow sufferer?

Sometimes a 'crazy' person will say what no one else will.

Some emotional disturbances are the direct result of harboring intense resentment for an unfairness done to you. Your friends can tell you to quit dwelling on it, your counselor can bring you slowly to that understanding but, when a fellow sufferer bluntly tells you in no uncertain terms to, "Get the heck over it", whatever 'it' may be, he is truly helping you and himself at the same time.

Some mental disorders disappear as soon as one quits plotting revenge, or trying to make right those things that just can't be made right.

Life is not fair!

Often, one must pick up what pieces they can and start over, or 'get on with it,' or 'get over it.'



Many times, the best advice a person can get is advice that they give to someone else to use. Who better to give that advice than a fellow sufferer who needs that advice for himself?

Sharing and gathering further information through books and journals can help to alleviate your anxieties and fears.

Friends and clergymen may also provide excellent support to overcome your anxieties. Self-support groups offer a kind (and sometimes not so kind) ear to listen to all your fears or anxieties.

One more item on this topic - listening to others will give you a good idea of how you come across to those who love you but are probably not as sympathetic as they used to be. It is difficult to have to listen to the same complaint over and over again. "He/she did me wrong. How can I ever be the same? Why, oh why?! Oh why?! Oh why?!"

Family *should* be a major support during your anxiety disorder treatment. A supportive family can help you to get over you anxieties. Your family should not support your disorder dramatizations.

At the same time, they should not be sarcastic or jeer at your fears. They should be patient and allow sufficient time for the different treatment techniques to bring about positive effects and results.

Your family can boost your self-confidence and support you in following remedial measures. Focusing on the positive aspects of your character helps you to develop an optimistic attitude.

However weird and vague your fears may be, your family and

therapist should stand by you to offer moral support during treatment. Instead of rebuking that are, to them, absurd fears - they should allow you to tackle them and provide you with the support you need as part of an effective treatment.

Important and definite changes in your lifestyle can prove very effective for treating your anxiety disorder symptoms. Review and analyze the stresses in your life, and find ways of doing away with them.

Let go of your drinking and drug addiction, if any. Instead, concentrate on developing a lifestyle with plenty of relaxation.

A psychotherapist is your true guide to deal with your anxiousness. Mental health professionals can identify the actual cause of your anxiety and suggest remedies for it.

A psychotherapist can refer you to the kind of support group that suits you best, whether on-line or in your community.

A regular pattern of proper eating habits, sleeping patterns and exercising can bring about excellent results.

## **Anxiety Disorder - The Recovery Process**

The recovery process of an anxiety disorder has five important steps. These are -

1. Diagnosis
2. Acceptance
3. Treatment
4. Setbacks
5. Resolving

### **Diagnosis**

Many ailments exhibit similar symptoms to anxiety disorders. Therefore, consult with your doctor first so that they will find whatever is to be found of a pathological nature, recommend vitamins, sleep or exercise as needed, and recommend a mental health care professional if necessary.

Self-diagnosis and drawing your own conclusions can be a dangerous proposition. You should consult a reputable therapist for a correct diagnosis of your symptoms, as well as for suitable treatment.

### **Acceptance**

It can be very difficult for you to accept that you have an anxiety disorder . You feel yourself to be different from others. This further

accentuates your fears and anxieties.

Non acceptance, or denial, only adds to anxiety and accelerates the arrival of another panic attack, intensifying the disorder. You may get to the point where you require immediate hospitalization.

Many sufferers take years to accept the reality. Sometimes, this is the very reason that they don't get well. Acceptance and cooperation with the full necessary treatment can help you overcome your anxiety disorder.

## **Treatment**

Treatment for your anxiety disorder depends on the intensity of your disorder and your personal capacity to accept facts and treatment. The symptoms of your disorder cannot disappear on its own. There could be temporary periods of subdued symptoms and the symptoms can be very intense at other times.

The point, or goal of treatment is to help you carry on with your normal daily activities. Additionally, it should try to cure the causes for the disorder and help you become who you were meant to be. Medications are normally a last resort, but necessary in very serious cases.

## **Setbacks**

Acceptance of treatment and your full cooperation, helps you to achieve satisfactory levels of treatment sooner. You can overcome most of your anxiety disorder symptoms.

However, sometimes, you experience a serious setback in the

treatment process that shakes your confidence. You begin developing your fears again. Accepting setbacks as a part of the treatment process is essential.

## **Resolving**

Understanding the factors that are responsible for the anxiety disorder in your life can be a major leap in your treatment process. You should be able to face all the types of feelings that you may experience at times, like shame, remorse and any inability to comprehend the true facts because of your anxiety.

Only when you become aware of all such factors, can you tackle your anxiety disorder effectively.

## **Part-VI: Natural Remedies for Anxiety Disorders**

### **Natural Remedies to Treat Panic Attacks**

**P**anic anxiety disorder, or panic attacks, is on the increase. Around 10% of the American population suffers panic attacks at crowded places. You become suddenly nervous, feel dizzy and uneasy and may suffer acute breathlessness.

Natural remedies may offer relief with few, if any, side effects.

#### **Natural Remedies for Panic Attacks**

Panic attacks occur due to high anxiety levels. This fear makes you feel very vulnerable and you develop hypertension. The best initial treatment for a panic attack is to calm your nerves.

Remember to breathe in deeply, and to let your breath out slowly.

Yawning, if you can get yourself to do it, relieves stress.

Stretching your muscles can be very effective.

#### ***Herbs and Aromas***

Natural herbs like lavender, passionflower and valerian may have calming abilities. Use these herbs as soon as a panic attack sets in. Similarly, scents like rose, neroli, frankincense, sage and bergamot also may soothe the nerves and help to calm an anxious person.

These natural herbs and scents are believed by many people to be very effective for anxiety attacks.

## ***Homeopathy***

Homeopathy is an alternative form of medicine using herbs and minerals to help to relieve many medical conditions. This form of medicine tries to improve the natural defense mechanism of your body and restore balance to your immune system.

Gelsemium 6X, taken every fifteen to twenty minutes with a maximum of four doses, may treat panic attacks effectively. 30C Aconite may be effective in very serious cases. You can stop the medication as soon as you feel calmer.

Natural remedies include **Yoga, massage therapy, acupuncture and hypnosis**. Yoga and meditation may help to keep you in control of the flow of your emotions and are believed by many people to help to develop a strong immune system and body mechanism.

Practice yoga regularly to build up your emotional and mental health. This, without other treatment, is claimed by some to completely heal emotional disorders in some people.

Massage therapy calms the total nervous system. Acupuncture and hypnosis offer similar relief from panic attacks.

But beware--- there are a lot of charlatans out there!

Natural remedies work to a greater or lesser extent for different people. Therefore, be willing to try more than just one and remember to keep your doctor informed.

Always follow your medical advice to get the best treatment for your panic attacks.

## Self-Help Techniques to Prevent or Cure Anxiety Disorders

**A**nxiety disorder is a form of nervous tension. Your anxiousness could take the form of general fear or a specific phobia.

Excessive fear can then take the form of a panic attack. You become desperate and have confusing thoughts. Your frustration could land you into serious trouble.

There are many different medications and behavioral therapies to help you combat the situation. However, over and above all these treatments and therapies, these self-help techniques can save lot of trouble and may prove very beneficial.

### Self-Help Techniques

**Nutritious Diet:** A healthy and balanced diet is best, with lots of fruits and vegetables and whole grains can keep your body system healthy. Irregular eating habits often make one irritated and tired. Anxious feelings, dizziness, nausea or headaches may develop because of irregular eating patterns. Many wrongly interpret these symptoms as an anxiety disorder instead of a simple distress signal sent by your body due to hunger. Also, be aware that food allergies can mimic the symptoms of anxiety disorders.

**Sleep:** A good night's sleep can work wonders for your anxiety disorders. Lack of sufficient sleep makes one irritable and causes stress. Sleep disorders make you feel physically exhausted. Practice a regular sleeping pattern by going to bed at the same time every



day and getting up at the same time. This regular schedule helps you to develop a specific sleep pattern, and is very healing.

**Exercise:** Physical exercise helps to reduce anxiety levels. This may be the best advice found in this book. See your doctor, get his/her agreement and workout every day for 20 minutes or more - depending on your physical condition and the advice of your doctor.

Practice a regular pattern of any suitable physical exercise like jogging, walking or swimming. This may do away with muscular stress and tension. Normal mental balance and an improved outlook should be aligned with a stronger, more physically fit body.

Also, try to locate humor in everything to maintain a happy frame of mind. Laughter, they say, is the best medicine.

### ***Support Groups***

Support groups are groups of people that suffer or have recovered from, the same problems or anxiety disorders. Some of these groups also include a psychologist or similar professional to provide guidance to members. Such groups help you talk over your problems with other members.

It makes you more aware of the factors causing anxiety disorders. These groups offer necessary support and relevant guidance, and usually provide great emotional support. You are able to gain your self-confidence more quickly and easily in such a free environment.

### ***Self-Help Books***

You can find many self-help books that provide information about anxiety disorders. Different books profess different techniques and

solutions to anxiousness. Read these books and gain an understanding of the underlying causes, as well as remedies that may work for you. However, you cannot be sure that the techniques in any given book will yield the desired result for your problems.

### ***Optimism***

Normally, one measures anxiety level on a scale of 1-10. You can develop optimism at times when your level of anxiety is low, fortifying yourself for the tough roads ahead.

However, the scenario changes with an increase in anxiety levels. The very positive thoughts, which were earlier acting as boosters, now seem to be actually making you more anxious. You are unable to offer yourself reassurance. Therefore, optimistic thoughts need to be combined with other behavioral techniques. This can prove more helpful than when each is used in isolation.

**Things to Avoid:** Avoid caffeine, alcohol and street, or illegal drugs to lower your anxiety levels. They generally prove to be a temporary relief and can bring more problems and anxiety. As soon as the effect of these substances decreases, you feel your anxiety back at the original, or higher levels.

### ***Meditation***

Meditation is a very good tool to relax tense nerves. Regular meditation helps to build a stronger nervous and immune system. Meditation is a secondary self-help technique. Many find peace, relief and, sometimes, real answers while in a proper meditative state.

But, for many, just the thought of meditative isolation produces anxiousness. To get relief through meditation, one must know how to do it properly. Read up on it if you think this might be for you.

Done correctly, meditation is a great teacher. It helps you to understand your strengths and weaknesses. It can identify the cause of your vulnerability and provide answers that come from within you.

**Develop a Hobby:** Often, an idle brain conjures up many different images that lead to stress and anxiety. Developing a healthy hobby keeps your mind engaged and productive.

**Music:** Music soothes frayed nerves and has a very calming effect. You often hum familiar songs or sing along for a few lines. Music relaxes all your nerves and it enters your subconscious mind. This produces extensive relaxation and a feeling of contentment. Music is an excellent mood improver.

## Treating Anxiety Disorders with Herbs

**A**ntidepressants and tranquilizers are believed by many people to be good for treating anxiety disorders.

However, one needs to take these medicines regularly to find any relief from anxiety problems. These medications may cause serious side effects and therefore, must be treated with caution.

Herbal remedies may be a good alternative to prescription drugs. These herbal remedies should be at proper potencies and you would have to take an adequate course for treating your condition. Herbs may offer specific remedies for anxiety problems.

**Consult a professional before taking these!**

**Do not experiment on yourself or on anyone else with these herbs. If taken in the wrong dosages, or for the wrong symptoms, they can aggravate your condition and may have serious negative effects.**

**Valerian herb** is believed by many people to have proven abilities to relieve anxiety disorders and insomnia problems. There should be a minimum of 0.8% valerenic acid in the extract. You might take three to four doses of this herb each day. It may provide relief within an hour.

Some people can take a 150 mg capsule three times a day for daytime anxiety disorders or a 150 mg capsule three-quarters of an hour before going to bed for a good night's sleep. If it does not induce sleep, they increase dosage gradually to 600 mg. Adding a

drop of valerian oil to your bathwater may also reduce anxiety. Some people boil a teaspoon of powdered valerian root in a pint of water for ten minutes, then add honey to the strained water and drink a cup before going to bed.

They say that you can enjoy sound sleep and won't suffer from panic attacks in your sleep. Always give two to four weeks between usage to avoid any form of habituation to the herb.

Valerian may provide excellent support to anxiety disorder patients. It induces sleep, relaxes muscles and lowers anxiety levels. It restricts movements of nerve inhibitors and impulses, thereby restricting movement of anxiety messages to brain.

**L-Theanine** is an amino acid present in Green Tea. This herbal remedy may be very effective even if you have it with other anti-anxiety drugs. Sun Theanine® contains 98-99% pure Theanine. Seredyn, a supplement with Sun Theanine, and the suppliers say that it is also equally effective.

**Passionflower** extract delivers good results from anxiety disorders. It may offer still better effect if you combine it with Valerian herb. Some people put in half to one teaspoon of the herb in a cup of boiling water and have a cupful every three to four hours to get the best relief.

45 drops of Passionflower Extract taken each day for four weeks may induce relaxed sleep and lower stress levels extensively.

**Kava kava:** Many people including Doctors and researchers advise against the use of kava kava, as it could cause serious liver problems.

One 250 mg capsule taken three times a day with meals is believed by some to lower anxiety levels significantly. If you suffer from sleep disturbances due to your anxiety, they say to take 4 to 6 capsules. However, do not take such capsules for more than four months continuously. Kava kava is claimed to be an effective herb for reducing anxiety levels and inducing a calm state of mind. If you suffer from sleep disorders due to anxiety, kava kava may provide relief.

**Fennel:** This herb is claimed to be effective in dealing with anxiety-related gastrointestinal problems. It relaxes the large intestine and reduces tension in the abdominal region. Some use it as a tea before or after meals.

**Feverfew:** This herb is claimed to have a calming effect on nerves and to reduce the incidence of headaches caused by anxiousness. One ounce of herb in a pint of water is claimed to be sufficient.

**Motherwort** herb may be useful in treating anxiety disorders with palpitations. Some people use a combination of this herb with linden blossoms and cramp bark to try to find relief from anxiety disorders coupled with high blood pressure.

**Skullcap:** This is an herbal remedy that suppliers suggest for panic anxiety disorders. They suggest boiling a teaspoon of the herb in a cup of water for ten minutes and taking two cups each day in half a cup dosages. That, taken at bedtime, is claimed to induce deep sleep, relax muscles and provide relief from tension and stress while also saving you from panic attacks at night.

Others recommend a mixture of equal parts of skullcap, peppermint, and sage. They boil one teaspoon of this mixture in a cup of water

for ten minutes and drink one cup as often as they feel necessary, to try to relieve tension headaches.

**Lavender** is claimed to have excellent relaxing properties and to be effective in relieving panic or anxiety attacks. Lavender contains coumarins, tannins, triterpenoids, flavanoids and volatile oil. All these are claimed by users to be good nutrients for your nervous system.

**Saint-John's-Wort:** This is thought to be a good antidepressant herb. It takes effect slowly and suppliers say that you may have to take it for many weeks before experiencing any substantial relief. Do not take it with other antidepressant drugs.

## Treating Anxiety Disorders with Vitamins and Supplements

Your body needs an adequate supply of vitamins and minerals to maintain good health. Lack of sufficient vitamins, specifically vitamin B, can cause many other deficiencies besides anxiety. This leads to stress and related side effects. B-vitamins are responsible for the smooth functioning of the adrenal gland in your body.

Excessive stress, coupled with a deficiency of vitamin B, can lead to a cessation of activity in the adrenal gland. Therefore, you are unable to handle stress and your anxiety levels soar.

### Source of Vitamins

B-complex vitamins consist of riboflavin, thiamine, niacin, folic acid, pyridoxine, cyanocobalamin, biotin and pantothenic acid. Generally, we receive the required quantity of vitamins from food like rice, leafy green vegetables, whole grains, nuts and eggs. However, if you suffer from any anxiety disorder, you probably need extra vitamin B1.

### ***Necessary Vitamins and Supplements***

600 to 1200 mg of calcium every day may increase your ability to face stress. Calcium supplements include Microcrystalline Hydroxy Apatite, Chelated Calcium, Calcium Carbonate or Calcium Citrate. Calcium may work best when taken with magnesium.

300 to 600 mg of Magnesium each day can lower anxiety levels and



is most effective used in conjunction with calcium. Magnesium Taurate is one supplement.

High potency Vitamin B-Complex and 3 mg of Vitamin B12, as present in Hydroxycobalamin, Dibencozide, or Methyl Cobalamin, when taken everyday, may help to combat anxious feelings and disorders.

Part-VII: Coping with Anxiety Disorders

## **The Impact of Anxiety Disorders**

**A**nxiety disorders are debilitating conditions, but not just to you alone; it has serious impact on people around you and creates problems for those with whom you regularly interact.

The very nature of these disorders separates you from your family members. It is often the cause of much tension with family members.

### **Impact on Your Family**

Close family members like the husband, wife, father, mother, siblings and offspring are adversely affected when a family member suffers from an anxiety disorder. The entire family may have to forego important social events due to one family member's anxiety.

There is a constant feeling of uneasiness within the family. This often leads to serious psychological and nervous problems for other family members as well. Sometimes, spouses or children develop anxiety disorders, or turn to unwanted vices like drugs or alcohol to relieve their constant tension or as a way to try to get the attention that they think should have been theirs.

Spouses of the afflicted have an especially difficult situation. Marriage is generally quite stressful enough, even between a well-matched couple and without the added burden, or difficulty, of an anxiety disorder.

Regular arguments over baseless matters, an inability to be affectionate or intimate, behaviors that confuse or embarrass and much more awaits the spouse and family of someone that is suffering from these disorders.

### **Impact on Economy**

Anxiety disorders are a matter of concern for the economy too. Often, one is unable to attend work regularly due to your anxiety disorder. Sick leave in education and employment has a negative influence on your own skills and success plus a marked effect on the wider economy.

### **Impact on Relationships**

Anxiety disorders put a strain on all relationships. Friends, co-workers, neighbors and acquaintances of the afflicted often encounter disturbing situations and may have to decide whether the association with that person is worth the trouble.

## How to Cope with Anxiety Disorders

### An Overview

**Stress** is a fact of life and can and should be motivational. Not enough money? Stress! Anxiety!

Solution? For most, there may be many solutions. One must make a decision and follow through with it until success or failure; change tactics or hold steady, and go from there.

Sometimes, however, the answer is so far beyond the individual's experience or capability that normal stress becomes anxiety and anxiety becomes panic attacks, and then the panic attacks become a full-blown anxiety disorder.

A child, for instance, is not yet responsible for itself or basically capable of looking after itself, but very bad things happen to children sometimes.

War, natural disaster, human wickedness or evil can bring a person to a condition where they are completely unable to even make sense of what has happened to him/her.

Control over their own life is taken from them, sometimes violently, and the mind seeks solutions to unsolvable problems. In one form or another, this is the most common cause of anxiety disorders.

The answer really seems to be to put all that in the past, and get on with living. That is much more easy to say, but how brutally difficult to do.

How do you get over losing your children to a spouse who took them from you, so that your relationship with them is no longer in your control?

How does anyone cope with losing their entire family to a drunk driver or house fire?

What makes all this worse is the realization that your *natural* feelings of bitterness, hatred, revenge, rage, or apathy ARE in your hands and you will only get worse if you continue to indulge yourself in these feelings.

Guilt, envy, jealousy and a number of other base emotions, will sooner or later lead to unnecessary anxiety and possibly to the kind of disorders discussed here.

So, you can see that a lot of control over your own life is still in your own hands. For some, however, the damage from whatever source is so great that the sufferer really can do nothing about it without professional help.

Here is an overview of anxiety, and some advice on what you can do for yourself to help cope with or help to alleviate the condition.

### ***Factors That Help You to Cope with Anxiety Disorders***

**Doctor:** If you're feeling overly anxious and don't know why, or even if you know, see a medical practitioner.

**Sleep:** Lack of sleep will, over a period of time, make anyone irrational, delusional and even a bit crazy. If you suffer from anxiety, please, get your sleep. Good sleep will reverse a lot of

damage to your body, mind and soul. Ofte, nothing else will work while you don't get the sleep.

**Humor:** Humor and laughter are very essential ingredients of your life. Laughing out loud eases tension and feels good. You should also be able to laugh at yourself. If you really can laugh at yourself, you are half-way home.

**Exercise:** Physical exercise builds your body strength and ability to cope with stressful situations. Regular exercise really can pull someone from the depths of ill health, anxiety disorders included. Again, consult your doctor for best results.

**Relaxation:** Muscle relaxation releases physical stress and tension. Hold your muscles tense and tight for ten seconds and then release them. Repeat this a few times to get the best benefits.

**Diet:** Your diet plays an important role in deciding your stress levels. A poor diet is often a major cause for general ill health, and/or anxiety disorders. Eat a balanced diet and take vitamins as needed, or indicated by your doctor. Vitamin B complex, when indicated, has been known to bring immediate, almost miraculous results.

**Support System:** Form an active support system with people that have similar anxiety disorders.

Similarly, a therapist can help you to overcome your stress through different kinds of therapies. Friends can also prove to be excellent support.

Maintain a close relationship with your friends, family members, and

other support groups to help you to improve control of your stress and anxieties.

**Time Management:** Learn to manage your time effectively according to your priorities and preferences. Do not try to be a perfectionist in everything. Instead, try to do things to the best of your ability, within an amount of your time that you specify.

Again, do not develop negative thoughts if you are unable to complete a chore. Learn to praise yourself for the work you have been able to do rather than becoming anxious about what you could not do or complete.

## How to Get Help for Anxiety Disorders

Your family doctor will be able to analyze the correct cause of your anxiety. If it is truly an anxiety disorder, you need to visit a mental health professional. Such health professionals are trained practitioners that can identify the particular type of disorder and prescribe proper treatment.

Professionals include psychologists, psychiatrists, counselors and social workers. These people have training in particular remedial therapies like behavioral therapy, cognitive therapy and others. If need be, they prescribe medications too.

An essential point is to develop the comfort factor with your therapist or counselor. If you are unable to develop closeness with your therapist, you may not benefit from the therapies as much as you otherwise might.

In that case, it might be best to look for some other therapist or counselor to work with you on your anxiety problems.

No medications or therapies for anxiety problems bring about results in a day. You have to follow them for many weeks and months before you are likely to find marked differences in your problems.

Some therapies may suit your temperament while some may not.

Again, you should not stop your medications abruptly. Sudden stoppage can cause adverse reactions. You should take and heed your doctor's advice before stopping any medication.



Most medications cause side effects. Your doctor can reduce the intensity of such side effects by adjusting dosages of your medications.

You can check with your insurance provider to see if they offer coverage for the treatment of anxiety disorders. Some health services and state aid programs of our government might also offer coverage.

## Ten Easy Ways to Boost Your Mood

**Meditation:** Meditation helps you tune out the stresses of your world for a while to concentrate on yourself. This isolation, done properly for five to ten minutes, may generate answers that are already in you, waiting for an opportunity for expression, or invite answers from the universe at large - take your pick. You may often find solutions to your stress and problems of living.

**Aromatherapy:** Aromatherapy uses the essential oils of flowers, plants and herbs to reduce stress levels. Such essences are often claimed to be a good remedy for many illnesses that occur due to stress. They may also enhance your mood and help you to relax.

**Music:** Music soothes frayed nerves and has a very calming effect. Hum familiar songs or sing along. Music can help to soothe shattered nerves and makes sense to your mind. This produces better relaxation and a feeling of contentment. Music is an excellent mood booster.

**Massage:** Massage therapy can reduce body tension, stiffness and stress. Ideally, massaging proves beneficial for your whole body and offers relaxation by lowering production of cortisol, a stress hormone. Absence of this hormone can make you feel happier and free from anxiety.

Massaging may clear your nervous, circulatory and muscular systems. This is claimed to help in the smooth independent and interdependent functioning of all the systems.

**Breakfast:** A good, nutritious breakfast in the morning can set your

mood for the day. Include fibrous foods in your breakfast, as fiber lowers emotional upsets and keeps you alert and active. This improves your mood, boosts your memory power and energizes your total being.

**Vitamins:** Vitamins are essential to, among many other benefits, maintain serotonin levels in your brain. Serotonin passes the message of well-being to the brain. A good supply of serotonin can keep you in a good mood.

One thing not emphasized enough in this book is the importance of sunlight to your overall wellbeing and your overall *feeling* of wellbeing. Sunlight, in proper amounts and with adequate protection against the well-known hazards, is essential for your body's health.

**Fats:** Good fats are essential for maintaining proper serotonin levels in your brain. You can get your supply of good fats from olive oil, fish and nuts. Consumption of these fatty substances is essential. You should avoid having saturated fats that are present in cakes and cookies.

**Humor:** Laughing relaxes your muscles and releases muscular tension. It reduces your pain and stress, thereby reducing psychological tension, too. Make humor an important part of your life and learn to laugh at yourself, as well as others. You feel your mood rising when you laugh out loud.

**Exercise:** Exercise keeps your body physically and mentally fit. It also changes the level of beta-endorphins in your body. These beta-endorphins are responsible for your moods. Exercise boosts your physical and emotional capacity, increasing your ability to cope with anxiety disorders. It also improves the functioning of your nervous

system. A fit body can easily deal with depressing thoughts and fight off foul moods.

**Yoga:** Yoga is claimed to be an excellent stress buster. This exercise can reduce stress levels, increase energy, and release tension. It may lift your mood too. Make sure that you only start Yoga with a qualified expert as many people are injured every year when they take it up.

These simple tips can boost your mood and provide some relief from anxiety disorders.

Part-VIII: Anxiety Disorders - Frequently Asked Questions

## **Anxiety Disorders – Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Are anxiety disorders a common occurrence?**

Yes. More than nineteen million Americans have anxiety disorders. Panic disorders are common, with around one to two percent of the U.S. population suffering from such panic symptoms. Scientists estimate that one in every four Americans is sure to suffer from anxiety disorders at some point of their lives.

### **What is the exact cause of anxiety disorder?**

There is no exact or single cause of anxiety disorder. Each one occurs due to a combination of many biological and psychological factors, stressful events and genetic factors.

### **How are anxiety disorders best diagnosed?**

A doctor is the only person to diagnose an anxiety disorder. Self-diagnosis may not be correct and even lead to harmful results. Therefore, visit a doctor as soon as you feel symptoms of anxiety disorder.

### **Is anxiety disorder the same as depression?**

No. Anxiety disorders and depression are two different ailments, although some of the symptoms overlap. These two ailments often occur concurrently. This situation is called co-morbidity.

More than 50% of those suffering from anxiety disorders suffer another ailment at the same time. This could be another form of

anxiety disorder or depression. Similarly, depression patients often suffer from general or social phobia anxiety disorder.

### **Are anxiety disorders hereditary?**

Anxiety disorders can pass through genes and run in families with histories of such disorders. There is no single gene responsible for anxiety disorders. It occurs due to a combination of different factors and genes are one of them.

### **Are anxiety disorders fatal?**

No but some anxiety disorder symptoms seem very dangerous and life-threatening. However, these symptoms are not fatal.

### **Are there treatments for anxiety disorders?**

Yes. There are effective treatments for anxiety disorders. These treatments mainly address the disorder in three different steps; reduction of physical symptoms, change in anxiousness and then behavioral changes.

### **Is there a total cure for anxiety disorders?**

Yes. Total cure is possible through correct assessment of anxiety symptoms, change of anxiety symptoms and adopting remedial measures like behavioral changes and necessary medications. Self-help, with adequate input from medical professionals, can also prove very beneficial.

### **What are the treatment options for anxiety disorders?**

Common treatment options for anxiety disorders include different therapies and medications. Some are behavioral therapy,

psychotherapy, cognitive-behavioral therapy, but there are also many others. Medications include antidepressants, anti-anxiety drugs and other tranquilizers.

### **Will I always have anxiety?**

Anxiety is a common human emotion and everyone has it. People with anxiety disorders are excessively anxious. Therefore, appropriate treatment can help to bring your anxiousness to lower, acceptable levels.

### **When do anxiety disorders develop?**

Anxiety disorders often have their beginnings in childhood and adolescence. Children have many different kinds of fear and, sometimes, certain fears remain embedded. Such fear imprints could be due to disturbing childhood incidents, or physical or mental assault. Sometimes, these fears disappear with age but they remain for some.

Panic disorders occur in early adulthood. Most people with panic disorder develop their disorders before the age of 24.

### **Which is the best treatment for anxiety problems?**

Scientifically proven treatments offer remedies for anxiety disorders. Each of these treatments could have different effects on different individuals. Therefore, your doctor is the best person to prescribe the most suitable treatment for you.

### **Is there any specific, sure medication for anxiety disorder?**

No. Medications do not offer total cures. These medications may

reduce anxiety symptoms in the short term, but none offer a lasting cure. There is a possibility of relapse if you stop medication.

### **Can alcohol to help control anxiety?**

No. Alcohol helps to reduce your anxiousness to a certain extent, but it impairs your sense of judgment and functioning. So, it is best to stay away from alcohol. Continued dependence on alcohol could have more serious and damaging consequences than the anxiety disorders.

### **Can anxiety medications affect an unborn child or a lactating mother?**

Medications during pregnancy and nursing are not advisable unless specifically prescribed by your own doctor. Your doctor is the best judge. They can determine the extent of your anxiety disorder and any absolutely necessary medications and vary the dosages of medications or other alternative treatment options where required.

### **Is there any difference between anxiety and panic?**

There is a very fine line of difference between anxiety and panic. Some argue that panic is an extension of excessive anxiety. However, doctors make a clinical distinction between the two.

### **Does a combination of treatments deliver results that are more effective?**

Doctors often prescribe a combination of medications and therapies for the most effective treatment of an individual.



### **Do anxiety disorders cause serious harm to overall health?**

Many people have anxiety disorders during their lifetime. However, such disorders are not known at this point to cause any other serious illnesses like ulcers, high blood pressure, or asthma.

Some sufferers may take alcohol to overcome their anxieties. That indulgence in alcohol could cause serious medical illnesses.

### **Is it possible to develop an addiction to anxiety disorder medications?**

Literature on the topic says, "No." Some patients develop a dependence on such medications to keep their anxiety levels low. Common medication for anxiety disorders is benzodiazepines. One should only take the prescribed dosages and not exceed them. Similarly, you should not withdraw these medications abruptly. It could lead to a relapse of anxiety symptoms and further complications.

This has been as complete an overview of anxieties and their treatment as I could provide.

It is my sincere wish that it may help you to a faster and easier recovery.

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