

Types of Anxiety

Generalised anxiety is extremely common. It usually starts when we have to deal with more major stresses that we can cope with at any one time.

Usually diagnosed by a GP when someone has been worrying for a minimum of 6 months about at least 2 specific stressful life events

Symptoms:

- Feeling agitated
- Irritability
- Inability to relax
- Difficulty concentrating/mind going blank
- Feeling of foreboding/depression

Along with physical symptoms like:

- Muscle tension
- Difficulty sleeping/restlessness
- Headaches/fatigue
- Upset stomach/dry mouth
- Heart palpitations/sweatiness
- Dizziness/quick, shallow breathing

They don't suffer panic attacks or phobias but they do feel overtaken by a sense of fear and they feel unable to do anything to help themselves to face it calmly.

Screen related anxiety (internet, social networking, smart phone addiction etc) Being in front of a screen for too long can induce a trance like state. This in itself is very addictive. Children are finding it more difficult to communicate because they are spending more time on computers, limiting meaningful social interactions with another human being so we lose the ability to read signals, facial expressions etc, we are unable to read cues, and we are lulled into a false sense of security. There are studies being conducted into correlation between screen and Internet bullying for example is a prime example of this.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

This is a constant state of high arousal generated by post traumatic stress - this can be a terrifying experience - where instead of the memory of that traumatic event gradually fading, it keeps them helplessly in full focus where the traumatic event is persistently re-experienced through

- Recurrent distressing recollections of the event with images, thoughts etc
- Recurrent distressing dreams
- Acting or feeling as though the event were happening all over again, flashbacks, illusions, hallucinations

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- Persistent avoidance of anything that could trigger associations such as feeling detached or estranged from others

Physical symptoms

- Difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Irritability or outbursts of anger
- Difficulty concentrating
- Exaggerated startle response.

For a diagnosis these symptoms must usually have been occurring for at least a month causing significant distress to the person with impairment to their social life/work life/daily functions

Panic Attacks

These are common in many ways to PTSD if someone experiences a full blown panic attack, they will probably rate it as the high level of fear they ever experienced

Symptoms:

- Palpitations or sensation of a pounding heart
- Quick, shallow breathing
- Excessive sweating
- Feeling sick and dry mouth
- Sense of needing to urinate or defecate
- Sensation of smothering and choking
- Trembling/shaking
- Dizziness or fainting
- Difficulty speaking (as a result of hyperventilating)
- Feeling detached

Phobia

An irrational fear that is so strong that it induces enormous anxiety or panic and a strong desire to avoid the creature or circumstance.

If you suffer from a phobia you will probably be aware that your fear is unreasonable and totally out of proportion but you are unable to control it.

OCD

Around 3% of people suffer from OCD, this is a condition in which someone's life can be virtually overtaken by frightening, intrusive, repetitive thoughts or impulses and the urgent need to perform specific actions to "make things alright"

The most common behaviours include repeated hand washing or "checking activities" e.g. a back door is locked or lights/gas turned off

Source: 'How to master anxiety' by Griffin and Tyrell.