

FACT SHEET 2: Anxiety

1



WHAT IS ANXIETY?

Anxiety is a normal feeling that everyone experiences from time to time. Anxiety is when you feel scared and worried a lot of the time. Sometimes you are not even sure why. Other words for anxiety are 'feeling tense' and 'feeling nervous'. Sometimes it can be very strong and feel like a panic that gets bigger and bigger. When this happens it can feel as if time is racing or running out.

A little bit of anxiety can be good for us. That is because we do things better when we are a little bit nervous.

But too much anxiety can be a problem. It can affect the way we do things. It can make us feel out of control.

When a person is too anxious, this is sometimes called an anxiety problem, or an anxiety disorder.

WHAT DOES HAVING ANXIETY FEEL LIKE?

If you have an anxiety problem you may feel some of these things:

Feel changes in your body like:

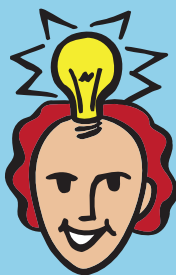
- A quick heartbeat
- Dizzy
- You want to vomit
- Sweaty
- Shaky
- Tight muscles
- You can't stay still
- Difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep

Feel changes in your thinking like:

- Finding it hard to concentrate
- Confusion
- Thinking about the same thing over and over
- Having strong thoughts zap into your head like 'I am going crazy', 'I will embarrass myself'

Feel changes in the way you behave like:

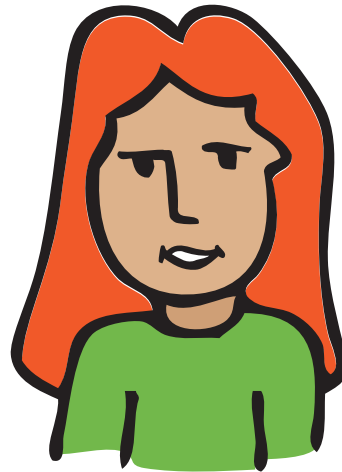
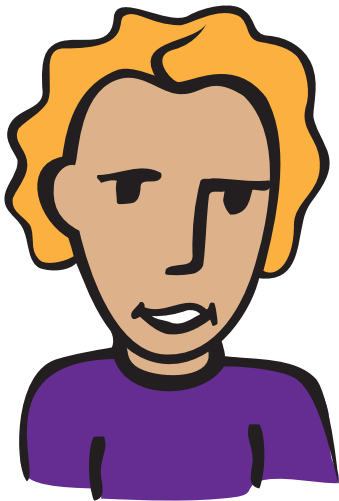
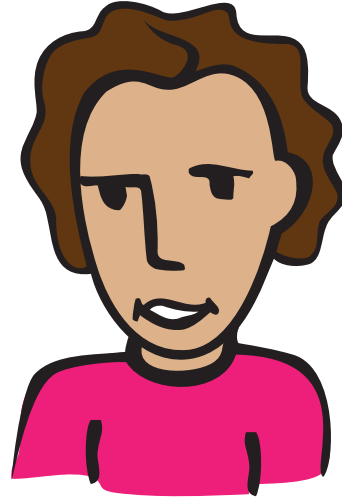
- Avoiding things
- Always looking out for danger
- Jumpy



REMEMBER many people have these things sometimes. A person who has an anxiety problem feels them a lot. They also feel them in a big way.

HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE AN ANXIETY PROBLEM?

About 1 in 4 people have an anxiety problem.



TYPES OF ANXIETY PROBLEMS

There are different types of anxiety problems. They all are a little bit different.



Sometimes people have strong feelings of panic that they can't control. When people panic, their heart might be beating very quickly. They may find it hard to breath. They may feel they are about to faint.



Sometimes people have the same thoughts over and over again, like thinking they may do something harmful. They may also do the same thing over and over again, like washing their hands.



Sometimes people feel scared about one kind of thing. They may feel scared about flying on an aeroplane, or being in closed spaces (like a lift).



Sometimes people worry about a number of things. They worry about things like health, money, family, or work problems. They worry about these things more than what would be expected. They find it hard to stop worrying.



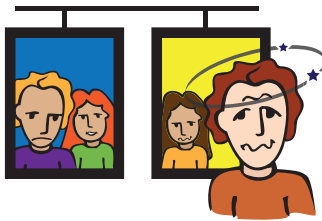
Sometimes people are anxious after something very serious and very stressful has happened, like seeing someone die, or being the victim of a serious crime.

WHAT CAUSES AN ANXIETY PROBLEM?

There are many reasons why someone may have an anxiety problem. Some reasons are:



A stressful thing happening



Other people in our family history have had an anxiety problem



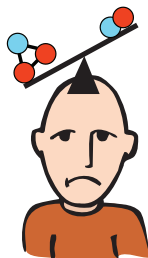
Not having a lot of support from others



Feeling unsure about the future



Using drugs like alcohol and marijuana

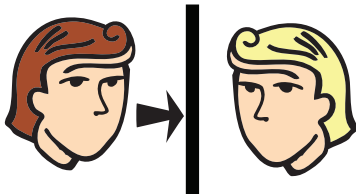


Changes in our body

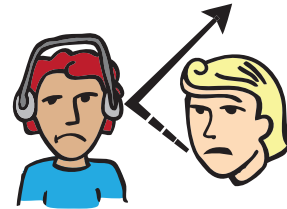
Sometimes people have an anxiety problem and no-one can understand why.

DISABILITY AND ANXIETY

People with disabilities sometimes have more stressful things in their lives than people without disabilities. The more stress people are under, the more chance they will become anxious. Some of these stressful things may be:



Not being able to communicate



Not being understood



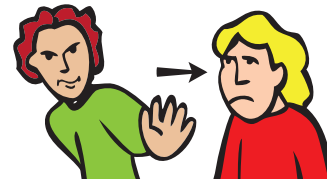
Having few friends



Having not much to do



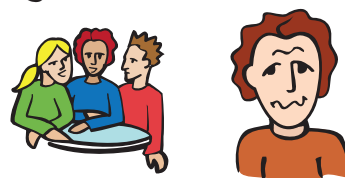
Not feeling in control



Being discriminated against



Unhappy life experiences



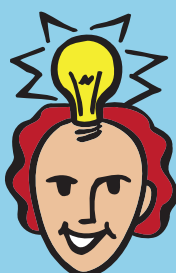
Not feeling included in things



Money problems



Health problems



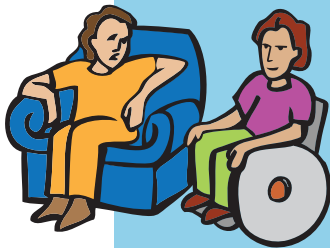
REMEMBER that everyone is different. Just because there are a lot of stressful things in someone's life, it doesn't mean that that person will develop an anxiety problem.



TYPES OF HELP

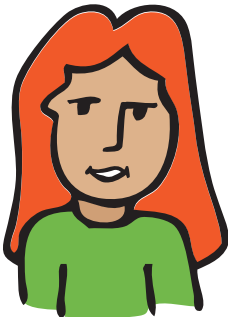
People with anxiety problems can be helped.

There are two main ways of helping someone with an anxiety problem. These are psychological treatment and medication treatment.



PSYCHOLOGICAL TREATMENT

Psychological treatment is when a person talks to a Psychologist in a structured way. Psychologists know how to talk to someone with an anxiety problem in a way that helps them.



A Psychologist can help you learn more about anxiety. They can help change some of your unhelpful ways of thinking. For example thoughts like 'I can't leave my house' are not helpful. Psychologists can help you feel more relaxed. They can teach you ways to feel less anxious.

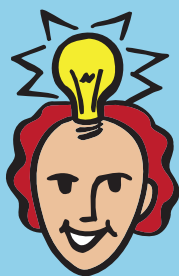


MEDICATION TREATMENT

Sometimes a person who has an anxiety problem may take medicine. This medicine helps with anxiety. However, medications do not fix the problems that make us anxious.

Each person needs to find the treatment that's right for them.

WHERE TO GET HELP



People with an anxiety problem may need to get help.

Talking with someone you trust can be a good place to start.

You may need to get help from someone like your doctor or psychologist.

In an emergency you can do one of these things ...



Call your Doctor

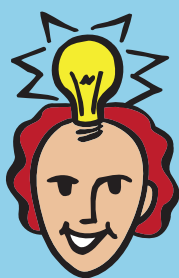


Call Lifeline if you live in Australia
on 131114



Go to a hospital

SOME THINGS TO REMEMBER



REMEMBER many people have anxiety

REMEMBER some anxiety is normal but too much is a problem

REMEMBER people with an anxiety problem can be helped



This Fact Sheet is linked to the work of the Bridging Project. The Bridging Project is being undertaken by Scope in collaboration with the Centre for Developmental Disability Health Victoria, Monash University. The mission of the Bridging Project is to progress the knowledge and resource base to ensure that people with complex communication and mental health needs have access to quality services. The project has two complementary streams, Building Evidence (increasing the evidence base in relation to individuals with complex communication and mental health

needs through research and related activities) and Building Capacity (building the capacity of services to address the mental health needs and preferences of individuals with complex communication needs). The project is designed around the needs of people who are 18 years or older.

More information regarding The Bridging Project can be found at the Scope Web Page, <http://www.scopevic.org.au>