

ANXIETY & PANIC ATTACKS

STOP ATTACKS IN THEIR TRACKS!



By Jeff Clease

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Table of Contents

Anxiety—What Is It?.....	3
Causes Of Anxiety.....	4
Who Suffers From Anxiety?.....	5
Other Forms Of Anxiety Attacks/Disorders.....	6
Panic Disorder And Panic Attacks.....	11
Getting Help.....	14
Medication And Treatment.....	15
Psychotherapy.....	18
Alternative Treatments.....	20
How To Make Your Treatment More Effective.....	21
Panic Attacks That Are Left Untreated.....	22
How To Prevent Panic Attacks.....	22
How To Lend Your Support.....	23
Resources.....	25

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Anxiety—What Is It?

Your heart is pounding fast and you are feeling dizzy. It seems as though you have to sit down in order for you not to fall. You are having trouble catching your breath. You are experiencing a numbing feeling in your hands and feet.

There is a tightening pressure in your chest area. You think you may be on the verge of a heart attack. You think something is really wrong with you; however, you are far from dying.

Anxiety is a mental disorder in which a person fears just about anything and they think every outcome will turn out for the worst. This fear is frightening because it is so intense and they always fear that someone is after them.

If you have any type of disorder that is associated with anxiety, then your mind will always be focused on being scared for no reason. You will always feel that there is no solution to your unfounded fear and that there is no way out.

You feel paralyzed as though you can't do anything. Basically, you are frozen with fear. This disorder can attack at any time.

Anxiety disorder is more than just one action. Anxiety disorder has different sub-disorders that can fit under this. For instance, there are panic attacks, obsessive compulsive disorder and others that are related to the anxiety disorder family.

There are many people all over that suffer from anxiety attacks. If you are not afflicted with them, you may know someone who is. If it is you, you need to know how to help yourself. If it's someone else, you need to know how to help them. You will have to be understanding and help them to get the treatment and support that they need to combat this condition.

Causes Of Anxiety

There is no one thing that causes this disorder and those that are related to it. You may think that there are certain things that trigger it. Well, there could be and then again, it may be something that just happens. It all depends on how it is perceived.

Those that the anxiety attacks or related disorders may have one attack. Then they may go back to the scene where the initial one took place and have another one. They are reminded of what happened before. They will feel bad and end up having another one without thinking about it. It seems like a constant cycle of intense fear. Then they feel that they will have more attacks.

Believe it or not, it's all in the mind. If you constantly fear and expect to have an anxiety attack or something related to it, then it will happen. The thing about this is people that experience these attacks resent having to hear that it's all in the mind. They feel that people are brushing this off as something that you can get over.

The feeling of anxiety comes from your brain. According to studies that deal with this, there are at least two areas of your brain that help to trigger the sense of fear and anxiety in your mind. It causes your brain to have a defense mechanism and then you react.

However, there can be situations that you may think cause anxiety and related attacks. Some people have so much stress nowadays. It can come from office politics, overwhelming debt, family issues and other events that can bring this on.

There are also some drugs that can trigger an anxiety attack from side effects or withdrawals. This would include alcohol, caffeine, cold medicine, decongestants, nicotine, diet pills and numerous other medications that people take for various ailments and illnesses.

Not eating right can also be a contributor to anxiety. There are some situations, where you may have to take a test or face a lot of people. If you're not ready, you can get nervous or jittery.

Who Suffers From Anxiety?

There is no certain group on this earth that is a target for anxiety and related attacks or disorders. So, with that said, who do you think suffers from this? Well, it could be anyone. It could be in your family, your friends, co-workers or anyone that you may know.

A lot of times, it could be those that you know and you would have never thought in a million years that they would suffer from something like this.

Unfortunately, these attacks are usually kept secret and not disclosed. This is one of those "sweep under the rug" embarrassment moments. This is not something that is talked about out in the open. Some people will acknowledge dealing with this when they are caught in the act and can't fake it.

Believe it or not, there are people such as politicians and even Hollywood celebrities who suffer from anxiety attacks and related conditions. However, they pay their publicists and others to keep it out of the public eye.

They don't want to be in the spotlight because they have to work on keeping up their image. However, what they may not realize is that someone may be able to benefit from their disclosure.

Unfortunately, for people that have to deal with this, anxiety attacks affect and tend to interfere with those who are trying to live a normal life. If you have excessive anxiety attacks, it can be related to a psychiatric condition. When these attacks become serious and they last a long time, they are considered to be out of the norm.

With the symptoms of an anxiety attack, the brain relays messages to other parts of a person's body. Certain parts of the body, such as the lungs and heart work overtime while the anxiety attack is happening. The brain ends up releasing a lot of adrenaline.

Other Forms Of Anxiety Attacks/Disorders

Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)

Generalized anxiety disorder, or GAD, deals with people that are constant worriers and are always tense. The thing about this is that there really isn't a cause for this, nor is anyone or anything at fault to provoke it. They look for the worst and are always extremely worried about work, family health and money. They even feel anxiety in the course of their normal day.

If this pattern is consistent for at least six months, a person can be considered as suffering from GAD. They feel that they cannot stop worrying even though the concern is not as great as they make it out to be.

It's difficult for them to relax, they are easily startled by people or noises and they have a hard time focusing. Sometimes they cannot sleep at night or wake up in the morning on their own. Here are some other symptoms that contribute to generalized anxiety disorder:

Feeling tired

Aching muscles

Irritable

Nauseated

Sweaty

Lightheaded

Shortness of breath

Frequent trips to the bathroom

Shaking or trembling

Hot flashes

If they don't have a high anxiety level and still suffer from generalized anxiety disorder, they can still be employed and be able to interact socially with others. However, if they have GAD on a higher scale, they may have trouble doing and completing simple tasks that others would take for granted.

Close to seven million American adults suffer from generalized anxiety disorders. There are more women (about twice as many) than men that are dealing with this. Even with that, the risk reaches its peak starting at childhood and going through the middle age years. Studies have shown that there are some genes that contribute to people getting GAD.

There are other anxiety disorders that happen in conjunction with GAD, such as substance abuse and depression. If treated properly, the person affected can overcome their worries with whatever problems they are dealing with.

Social Anxiety Disorder

Social anxiety disorder, which is also known as social phobia, happens when a person is extremely self-conscious and anxious. It happens everyday in different social situations. They are extremely fearful of being watched.

They are also fearful of being judged by others. They try to be extremely careful and go out of their way to not do things that could cause them embarrassment.

For a while, they are extremely fearful prior to a situation that they feel can become a disaster. It can become so bad that they lose focus and can't think straight. With social anxiety disorder, they can allow this fear to cause them to lose focus.

It doesn't matter whether it happens at school, work or at home. Having social anxiety disorder can make it difficult for the person affected to cultivate relationships with others.

With social anxiety disorder, it may be somewhat difficult for people to get over their excessive fears and concerns. This is true even if they know that what they feel is not realistic. Some will try to make amends.

Even then there is a feeling of anxiety and they don't feel comfortable when they are around other people. Then they are overly concerned of how others thought of them after the encounter.

A person could be in a social setting (for example, at dinner with someone or more than one person) and they will experience anxiety because they are fearful. They will sweat a

lot, blush, shake, or find it difficult to hold a conversation with other people at the table. They always seem to feel that other people are watching them.

There are over 15 million adults in the United States alone that suffer from social anxiety disorder or social phobia. For the most part, this condition begins as a child and can continue through adolescence.

There are some studies that say genetics plays a part in this. This condition is often coupled with depression or other anxiety disorders or attacks. It is not a good idea for those affected to treat themselves with medication. It could make the situation worse. This is better treated with professionals that are experienced in this field.

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

People that deal with obsessive-compulsive disorder, or OCD, constantly have thoughts that can make them upset. In order to get their anxiety under control, they use compulsions (rituals). However, the tables end up turning on them because the rituals take control over their mind.

For instance, there are some people that are obsessed with being clean. They are known as "clean freaks". Of course, it's a good practice to want everything to stay clean, but they can get to the point of being overly controlling about germs or dirty surfaces.

They have a compulsion to wash their hands continuously. They don't want any germs or dirt to touch their hands. When they go to the bathroom, they will take a paper towel to open and close the door, just to keep from getting germs on their hands.

If people that have OCD don't feel like they look their best, they will look in the mirror several times until they feel they are presentable. They don't want to feel as though they look out of place among others.

These actions provide them with a temporary release of the anxiety that they have been feeling. People with this disorder are always compelled to check things repeatedly, or make sure that things are in the same place repeatedly.

Sometimes, they are obsessed with ideas of violence or harm to others. They also have thoughts of crazy things that people would not normally think about. There are times when they feel they have to hoard and keep things that they don't need.

There are some that have rituals in their home. One of the more common ones is checking the stove several times before they leave to make sure it is off. Having obsessive-compulsive disorder can turn into havoc and an unwelcome interruption when it happens on a daily basis.

When a person is engrained with obsessive-compulsive disorder, they know what they are doing doesn't make much sense, but they don't look at their behavior as something that is abnormal.

There are over two million adults in the United States that have obsessive-compulsive disorder. This condition does not stand out on its own. It can be combined with things such as anxiety disorders or attacks, depression or eating disorders.

This disorder affects women and men almost equally. It usually starts as a child or it can start in the teen years or even as an adults. Through research, there is an indication that OCD can happen through genetics. At least of third of all adults in the United States start out with OCD as a child.

The symptoms of obsessive-compulsive disorder can come and go at any time. If it really gets bad, it can severely affect a person from acting in a normal capacity and doing certain tasks. It's a good idea for those that are dealing with this not to use alcohol or drugs to calm them down. It just makes the situation worse for them.

There are certain treatments and medications that can be used to ward off obsessive-compulsive disorder. They can help people that are in fear or anxiety to be desensitized to what is going on around them.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or PTSD happens when someone has suffered something that included harm of the body or implied the threat of harm. The person who gets PTSD may have been harmed, or it may have been someone close to them.

PTSD is commonly known in regard to veterans who served in a war. However, there are other things, such as a rape, kidnapping, abuse, vehicular accidents, plane crashes or natural disasters such as hurricanes or floods.

Those that suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder can be easily startled. They also have no feeling for those who they used to have a close relationship with. They start to have less interest in things they used to do. They show less affection, are increasingly aggressive and show more of the irritable side.

They try to block out things that remind them of that traumatic event instead of working through it. If the event was something that someone else deliberately acted on against them, then PTSD will greatly affect them.

Nightmares can haunt them and they start to see flashbacks such as sounds, feelings and images of what happened. There are sounds that can remind them of that event. For instance, if a door slams, then that could mean that someone has you trapped in a room and ready to pounce on you with their abuse.

It could be physical or verbal. Some people don't realize that verbal abuse is just as bad, if not worse than physical abuse.

Keep in mind that everyone who has been traumatized will not experience PTSD. Some people are able to cope with what happened and move on. There are others that need therapy and medication to deal with their issues.

PTSD can start a few months after the event or incident. It could last for a few more months, or continue through the years. In order to be officially classified as PTSD, the symptoms have to continue for at least a month. There are some who end up having PTSD as a chronic condition.

There are over seven million adults in the United States that are dealing with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. It can start from the childhood years and work its way up to adulthood. There are more women that suffer from this than men. PTSD is also combined with substance abuse, depression or other anxiety disorders or attacks.

Panic Disorder And Panic Attacks

Panic disorder is considered to be an illness. Symptoms include feeling suddenly terrorized, feeling faint, pain in the chest or feeling smothered. Panic attacks fall under the panic disorder condition and are prone to some of these same symptoms, plus others. When someone is having a panic attack, there are thoughts that are unrealistic or they fear that they are no longer in control or a situation.

With panic disorder, a person can also experience depression, or substance abuse. If these conditions are attached to their panic disorder, they should not be treated together. Sometimes they will feel sad or won't want to eat. They may not be able to sleep or only sleep for a few hours. They don't have much energy to do anything and they cannot maintain focus.

Panic Attack

A panic attack is when a person has a fear or apprehension that is sudden or intense. There is usually nothing wrong and no one is in danger. Panic attacks can happen suddenly, last for a few minutes, and then it's over. There are others that last longer than a few minutes or there may be more than one and they follow behind one another.

There are three types of panic attacks:

Spontaneous –these panic attacks occur with no warning. There is nothing that could possibly bring it on. Even if a person is sleeping, they can still experience a panic attack.

Situationally bound – these panic attacks happen when there is a situation to which a person has been or will be exposed to. They are consider to trigger or provoke the panic attack. For instance, if a person hears a car backfire, it could remind them of when they were in the military and fighting a war with ammunition.

Situationally predisposed – these panic attacks can happen when there is a delayed reaction. The attack doesn't always occur right away. There are some instances where people may immediately have an attack, and other instances it is delayed or it may not happen at all.

Panic attacks are defined as having at least four or more symptoms:

A choking feeling

Lightheaded or dizzy

Shaking Trembling

Shortness of breath

Accelerated heartbeat

Pain in chest

Numbness

Chills

Feeling of going crazy

Nauseated

Sweating

Feelings of detachment

If a person experiences less than four symptoms, they can still be classified as having a panic attack, but it would be called a "limited symptom" panic attack. A person can have a panic attack at any time. It can even happen when they are sleeping. It has affected millions of adults in the United States.

However, there are more women that experience panic attacks. In fact, women experience panic attacks twice as much as men do. Panic attacks can start in the late teen or early adult years.

There are people that have frequent panic attacks and allow themselves to become almost helpless. There are some places where they will have stay away from because it can trigger another attack.

Or a person may not be able to participate in some activities, like going shopping and related outings. Most of the time, they are confined to where they live and won't go out unless someone else is with them.

This condition is called agoraphobia, which is when a person is fearful of open spaces or being out and about by themselves. If they seek help early for this, the progressive treatment can be successful.

It is a very treatable anxiety disorder and will respond to most medications or therapies that are provided to them. Medication and/or therapy can help the affected person to alter the way that they think in order to rid themselves of fear and anxiety.

If you have frequent panic attacks, you may have a panic disorder. Panic attacks become a panic disorder when the condition becomes chronic. Your life can be in serious danger, along with others.

Getting Help

If you think you may be experiencing symptoms of an anxiety disorder, attack or related condition, please consult with your physician. He or she will be able to advise you if your symptoms match the clinical diagnosis of any of these mental health conditions.

If it is the case, you will need to consult with a professional that specializes in mental health conditions. These professionals are trained in therapy that deals with various behavioral patterns and will suggest medication if it is warranted.

Find one that you will be comfortable about discussing your condition with. You don't want to feel intimidated by their presence. You want to be relaxed and to be able to discuss what is going on with you. The mental health professional will work with you to devise a plan that will help you get over your struggles with these kinds of disorders and attacks.

If you are prescribed medication, you must take it as directed and don't stop unless you are advised by your physician. You and the mental health professional or your physician should discuss how the medication will work. If you have side affects, please consult them as soon as possible. They may have alter your dosage.

In regard to costs for medication and treatment, most insurance plans will cover that. However, don't assume and check with your insurance company first. If you lack insurance, check with your local or country government agency to seek mental health care at one of their facilities.

The governmental agencies usually stick to a sliding scale depending how much that you can pay. Or if you have public assistance, Medicaid may kick in to pay for these services.

Medication And Treatment

For the most part, medication is used for anxiety attacks, disorders and related conditions. The choices can depend on what the condition is and what the person wants. A physician must conduct a thorough evaluation to determine if they are indeed suffering from one of these mental health conditions.

If so, it must also be established as to what type of disorder they are dealing with. If there is a combination of things, they must also be identified so that the physician will know how to treat it.

If they have already received treatment from an existing or a past anxiety disorder condition, the physician needs to know that. They also need to know if medication was given and the dosage.

Or if they had other treatment, that needs to be disclosed as well. If there were any side effects, that should be included, along with any therapy that was provided and if it was beneficial for them.

There are some people that feel that the treatment they received did not work for them. Sometimes, it could be they may not have had enough time for the process to change or it was not done correctly. Some people may have to go through different medications or treatments to find what will work for them.

Medication is not the cure all for anxiety disorders, attacks and related conditions. However, medication can control these conditions while the person is receiving therapy. Medication can only be used if a physician prescribes it.

They are usually prescribed by psychiatrists that offer therapy of work with colleagues that provide some of the same services. For the most part, the medications that are used for anxiety disorders are:

Antidepressants

Anti-anxiety drugs

Beta-blockers

Using any of these medications can help the person to live a normal life.

Antidepressants

Originally, antidepressants were used for treatment of depression. However, they also work for those that are suffering from anxiety disorders. They work to change the chemistry in the brain. Once the initial dose is taken, it takes at least 4 to 6 weeks before the symptoms will go away. The medication must be taken as directed in order for this to work.

SSRIs – Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors – these antidepressants work to change the level of the communication of the brain cells. Some of the more common ones are Prozac, Zoloft and Lexapro.

They are used to treat any panic disorder that is mixed with social phobia, depression or OCD. Since these are newer, they don't have as many side effects. However, those that use them may experience being jittery or nauseated in the initial stages of taking them. This is only temporary.

Tricyclics – These antidepressants are older than SSRIs and are used for anxiety disorders other than OCD. They are administered with a low dosage and increase gradually.

Side effects include being dizzy, dry mouth, drowsy and weight gain. This can be eliminated by adjusting the dosage or using another medication of the same kind of antidepressant. Tofranil is used for GAD and panic disorder; Anafranil is used for OCD.

MAOIs – Monoamine Oxidase Inhibitors – these are the oldest of the antidepressants available to use for these conditions. It is mostly used for anxiety disorders, attacks and related conditions.

Some of the more common ones are Nardil, Marplan and Parnate. When taking MAOIs, there are certain foods and drinks that you have to stay away from. That would include cheese and red wine.

In addition to that, you cannot take Advil, Motrin, Tylenol or any other pain, cold or allergy reliever medication. Plus, women will not be able to use certain types of birth control pills. Herbal supplements are also off limits. Mixing MAOIs with any of these can cause an adverse reaction.

Anti-Anxiety Drugs – Drugs such as benzodiazepines are highly potent. They work to fight off anxiety and have very few side effects. Being drowsy is the only one that is noticeable. This drug is only prescribed for a brief period of time. Physicians are weary about providing them to past drug abusers.

Because people can get easily addicted to them, they look for additional doses so they can keep going. However, if the person has panic disorder, they can use these drugs up to a year.

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