

Assignment of GEN205

Understanding Anxiety Disorder: Symptoms, Causes, and Management



Submitted By: Group 1

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Introduction

What Is Anxiety Disorder?

Anxiety disorder is a psychological circumstance characterized by constant and intense feelings of worry, fear or unease that intervene with daily functioning. Unlike normal stress, which is short-term and usually linked to a specific situation, anxiety disorders are long-lasting and can occur without a clear reason. They include various forms such as generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), panic disorder, and specific phobias, each affecting emotional, social and physical functioning [[American Psychiatric Association, 2023](#)]. Symptoms may include restlessness, tiredness, difficulty focusing, muscle tension, and trouble sleeping.

Why Is It Important?

Recognizing anxiety disorders is crucial because they are among the most frequent mental health conditions worldwide and often develop early in life. Without proper care, they can result in more serious mental health challenges, such as depression or addiction. Early identification, along with access to effective treatment like – cognitive-behavioral therapy can greatly enhance a person's quality of life and help reduce the broader impact of mental illness [[Hofmann et al., 2012](#)].

Symptoms and Types

Symptoms:

Symptoms of anxiety disorders vary depending on the type. Most common symptoms are:

Psychological:

- Feeling panic, fear, dread and uneasiness.
- Feeling irritated.
- Uncontrollable thoughts.
- Difficulty concentrating.

Physical:

- Restlessness.
- Trouble in breathing and sleeping.
- Cold or sweaty hands.
- Dry mouth.
- Nausea.
- Numbness or tingling in your hands or feet.

These symptoms can interfere with daily life and differ in intensity among individuals [[American Psychiatric Association, 2025](#); [NIMH, 2025](#)]

Types:

There are several types of anxiety disorders according to the American Psychiatric Association's 'Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders'. Types of anxiety disorders include:

Generalized Anxiety Disorder: GAD is a mental condition where one worries constantly and cannot control it.

Social Anxiety Disorder: Social anxiety disorder is a long term and extreme fear of social situations which is also known as social phobia.

Panic Disorder: Panic disorder is an anxiety disorder where one regularly has sudden attacks of panic or fear.

Separation Anxiety Disorder: This condition happens when one feels excessive anxiety when he is separated from a loved one, like a primary caregiver.

Specific Phobias: A phobia is when something causes you to feel fear or anxiety that's so severe it consistently and overwhelmingly disrupts your life.

Causes and Risk Factors

The cause of anxiety disorders is not attributed to a single factor but is the result of an interplay between genetics, brain chemistry, life experiences, and ways of thinking.

People who have a family history of anxiety are more likely to develop it, suggesting a strong genetic link [\[Hettema et al., 2001\]](#). Neurochemical and neuroimaging studies show that chemical imbalances in neurotransmitters like serotonin and gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA)—both essential for mood and fear—play a significant role in triggering anxiety symptoms [\[Shin & Liberzon, 2010\]](#).

Environmental circumstances are also significant. Traumatic experiences, physical or emotional abuse, neglect, or exposure to prolonged stress—especially during childhood—can predispose an individual to anxiety disorders [\[NIMH, 2022\]](#). Lack of emotional support or unstable relationships can also heighten the risk.

Psychological tendencies have a part to play too. People who routinely expect the worst or distort innocuous situations as threats are more likely to experience excessive anxiety [\[Beck et al., 1985\]](#).

Overall, it's the way that all of these biological, psychological, and environmental components interact and combine that influences the way that anxiety begins and its intensity.

Diagnosis and Treatment

They are diagnosed by mental health professionals through clinical interview, symptoms assessment, and physical examination to rule out medical causes. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5) is the global diagnostic manual for defining the specific criteria of different anxiety disorders [\[American Psychiatric Association, 2013\]](#).

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is considered to be the most effective psychotherapy. CBT teaches individuals to observe and challenge irrational thoughts, gradually exposing them to feared activities. Several studies confirm the long-term effectiveness of CBT for generalized anxiety disorder, social anxiety, and panic disorder [\[Hofmann et al., 2012\]](#).

Treatment with medication is often combined with therapy, especially for serious to moderate illness. Medications that are most often utilized include:

- **Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs)** like sertraline or escitalopram, which increase levels of serotonin to improve mood
- **Serotonin-Norepinephrine Reuptake Inhibitors (SNRIs)** such as venlafaxine
- **Benzodiazepines** for short-term relief, even though they carry dependence risk [\[Bandelow et al., 2017\]](#)
- **Beta-blockers** for controlling physical symptoms like trembling or pounding heart [\[Mayo Clinic, 2023\]](#)

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and exposure are sometimes used as adjunct treatments in some cases [\[Khoury et al., 2013\]](#).

A combination of therapy, medication, and lifestyle changes—tailored to the individual—is usually the optimal method of treatment. Long-term success depends on ongoing monitoring and follow-up.

Coping Strategies and Prevention

Managing anxiety is daunting, yet cultivating healthy daily habits can be quite beneficial. Regular physical activity, like walking or yoga, helps release tension and reduce stress. Consistent sleep habits allow the body and mind to recover. Mindfulness practices, like deep breathing and meditation, help you stay in the moment and manage anxious thoughts [\[Khoury et al., 2013\]](#).

Social support is also crucial. Frequent informal talking with friends, staying in touch with family members, or attendance at support groups provides an individual emotional strength and dispels loneliness. If anxiety interferes with daily life, referral by an accredited counselor is a wise step.

To prevent symptoms from worsening, avoidance or restriction of alcohol and caffeine, which may cause anxiety for some individuals, is required. Healthy eating with vegetables, fruits, and whole grains also assists in fostering mental well-being.

Incorporating these habits builds resilience as time goes by. Minor, consistent lifestyle and mindset modifications can greatly increase anxiety management [\[NIMH\]](#).

Conclusion

Anxiety disorders are serious but treatable mental illnesses. Their symptoms, causes, and types must be known first so that they could be managed accordingly. Through early diagnosis, cognitive behavior therapy, and medication are found to be very effective interventions. Lifestyle habits, support groups, and stress management also play a vital role in the recovery process in the long run. Public awareness and open conversation about anxiety can reduce stigma and allow more people to receive the help they need to live healthier, better-balanced lives.

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