

12

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF

ANXIETY DISORDERS



MERIDIAN
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MENTAL HEALTH

DO I HAVE AN ANXIETY DISORDER?

Anxiety can be a normal (and healthy) emotional response to a variety of triggers. In fact, these feelings can be extremely helpful when in dangerous situations, and a small amount of stress can provide motivation in certain circumstances.

However, some people experience high levels of anxiety that can negatively affect daily life and relationships. In these cases, unrelenting anxiety can be frustrating and scary, so it's important to know that you don't have to navigate these feelings alone.

Anxiety disorders are some of the most common mental illnesses in the United States, ranging from mild to severe, and can include generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, social anxiety disorder and numerous phobia-related disorders.

Sadly, many people live with their anxiety issues for years, never realizing that their feelings are abnormal or that they can get help. If your anxiety is getting in the way of daily life, it's likely time to speak with a mental health professional. But first, let's look at some common indicators of an anxiety disorder.

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SIGNS + SYMPTOMS

1

FEELING NERVOUS OR ON EDGE

Everyone feels nervous once in a while. Athletes often feel nervous before big games and students get nervous before an important test.

However, these nervous feelings should dissipate after the event is over. Anxiety disorders cause anxious feelings to linger even if nothing stressful is happening. If you experience a constant and general sense of nervousness, this could be an indicator of a bigger problem.

2

CONSTANT WORRY ABOUT DIFFERENT THINGS

It's normal to have stressors or worries about big life events. The problem arises when worrying expands to small or insignificant things. For example, it's common to worry about a presentation at school or work, but if you worry about which pencil you'll take notes with, that is an indicator. These feelings can become so strong that they may be hard to differentiate between logical worries and anxiety.

An overwhelming sense of worry (not sparked by any specific thing) is an indicator of a bigger anxiety problem, and those with an anxiety disorder find it extremely difficult to shake an anxious, worried state.

3

PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS BEGIN TO DEVELOP

Many people who work to manage an anxiety disorder note physical symptoms that arise. Common issues can include muscle aches/tension, twitching, trembling, nausea, diarrhea, stomach pains and headaches.

These physical symptoms are often associated with generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), which usually involves a persistent feeling of anxiety or dread that interferes with a person's day-to-day life.

4

HAVING TROUBLE SLEEPING

Trouble sleeping can be due to a variety of reasons, and while not every reason is associated with anxiety, those with a disorder commonly experience trouble falling or staying asleep. Anxious feelings that last throughout the day may lead into the night, ultimately affecting the person's ability to sleep.

It's a vicious cycle. Anxious thoughts can make it harder to fall asleep, but not sleeping well also increases those anxious feelings. A [2019 study](#) found that people who suffer from insomnia were nearly ten times more likely to have anxiety. Again, by itself, trouble sleeping doesn't necessarily indicate an anxiety disorder, but if it becomes an unrelenting problem, it can be.

5

FINDING IT HARD TO RELAX

People with anxiety have a hard time silencing their brains. They often find it hard to relax and tend to struggle with downtime. They occupy their time because they are concerned that something bad will happen or that they should be doing something constructive. If you struggle to relax your body (and more importantly, your brain), this could be an indicator.

6

DIFFICULTY CONCENTRATING

Most anxiety symptoms are closely related to each other. Trouble concentrating could be connected to other signs like uncontrollable worrying or the inability to relax.

Difficulty concentrating is often connected with other mental disorders like attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), but while they share certain symptoms, ADHD and anxiety are not the same.

However, a lot of people experience both. Those with severe ADHD may develop anxiety if their disorder affects their daily life and personal relationships. See a mental health professional if you are struggling to concentrate or cannot differentiate your symptoms between ADHD and anxiety.

7

GETTING TIRED EASILY

People with heightened anxiety tire easily. Naturally, you won't feel well-rested if anxiety prevents a good night's sleep, but it's more than that. Anxiety affects the person's hormones and causes a rush that ultimately drains their energy. Even if the crash is temporary, the exhaustion afterward takes longer to subside. After these moments, even individuals who get a good night's sleep struggle to reset energy levels and reduce tiredness.

Being in a near-constant state of stress caused by anxiety affects the body in many ways: chronic fatigue, immune system issues, mood disorders, and more.

8

BEING EASILY ANNOYED OR IRRITABLE

Anxious feelings affect a person's mood. Individuals dealing with anxiety often get annoyed or irritated very easily. Their moods can also swing from one extreme to the other, which is mostly due to the heightened stress levels they experience. Sporadic moods and irrational anger with people or situations can be an indicator of a larger anxiety disorder.

9

FEELINGS OF DREAD + EXTREME FEAR

People with an anxiety disorder can experience a constant feeling of dread. In some cases, it feels like something bad will happen at any second, which makes living your life difficult. Some individuals may not want to leave the house, in an attempt to prevent what they feel is inevitable, while others may deal with these thoughts more subtly. For example, some people may find it hard to be excited, constantly waiting for the bad thing to materialize.

This fear can also present itself as a phobia. While everyone is afraid of something, some people's fears are so extreme that it interferes with daily functioning. Phobia disorder is an intense fear of a specific object, situation, or activity. The fear is so intense that it causes panic attacks or the need to adjust one's life to avoid exposure.

10

MULTIPLE + FREQUENT PANIC ATTACKS

It's common to experience anxiety as a lingering state of worrying. However, it may also manifest as a panic attack, which can occur more intensely and for a shorter period of time. During a panic attack, you may have an accelerated heartbeat, chest pain, trouble breathing, or dizziness, and it can start with little to no warning (making the disorienting experience even scarier).

Keep in mind that (similar to many of the other warning signs), it is possible to have a panic attack without an anxiety disorder. However, if you've experienced multiple attacks throughout your life or have them frequently, it can be an indicator of a bigger anxiety problem.

11

INTERFERENCE WITH DAILY LIFE

It's normal to feel anxious or worried from time to time. But, when those feelings affect your daily life, it's an indicator of something more. If your anxiety keeps you from completing tasks, affects your performance at work or school, or stops you from leaving the house entirely, it may be time for help.

12

YOU HAVE CONSIDERED GETTING HELP

One of the biggest indicators that you may have a disorder is that you have considered seeking help from a professional. However, most people with anxiety don't realize that they can get (or even need) help. If you've considered talking to someone about your anxiety, or have had family members mention their concern for your well-being, help is out there!

DON'T LIVE WITH THESE FEELINGS

Anxiety disorders are more common than most people realize. Even though many people across the globe struggle with anxiety every day, it's still important to get help. Lifestyle changes, coping skills, psychotherapy, relaxation techniques and medications can all make a noticeable difference for someone who is struggling.

Mental health is a complex issue that affects each person differently. There is never a perfect time to get help — but when you're ready, so are we. Contact Meridian HealthCare today to get on the road to a healthier, happier life.

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