

# Anxiety relief

Do you or someone you know, suffer from anxiety?

It can be pretty scary sometimes. Anxiety can make you feel out of control and can be highly debilitating for the sufferer but also upsetting for friends and family.

The incidence of anxiety is escalating; it is now considered to be the most prevalent of all mental health disorders. As the world continues to change at an accelerating rate and fear is propagated from every corner, there is little relief for anxiety sufferers. Change often leads to feelings of instability and insecurity which triggers stress and anxiety. As teenagers there is so much change in your life as you grow and develop and face new and 'exciting' challenges.

Everyone gets a bit stressed from time to time. When you're doing exams or been asked to do public speaking, learning how to drive or going to a new school, moving to University or other higher education these can cause fear and stress. It's natural to worry about how you will cope and perform in these situations. But when these feelings are excessive and become overwhelming then you may be experiencing anxiety.

*By definition, an **anxiety disorder** is characterized by excessive, uncontrollable and often irrational worry, that is, apprehensive expectation about events or activities.*

It's basically fears on steroids.

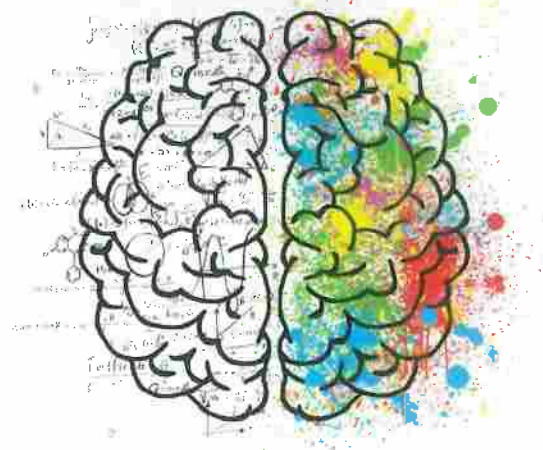
**Have you experienced a number of these?**

## Physical Symptoms of anxiety

- Racing heart
- Dizziness or breathing rapidly
- Shortness of breath or fast shallow breathing
- Shaking or trembling
- Weakness
- Tension in your muscles
- Sweating
- Tummy pains; from butterflies to feeling sick
- Loss of appetite
- Irregular bowel function
- Difficulty sleeping

## Emotional anxiety symptoms

- Excessive worry especially about the future
- Not able to let go of what happened in the past
- Feeling fearful and apprehensive



- Feeling powerless
- A sense of impending panic, danger or doom
- Mind racing, finding it hard to think clearly
- Feeling unproductive
- Difficulty concentrating and remembering things

Causes of anxiety are varied and differ for different people. Generally, someone who has experienced an ongoing situation or lives in an environment of fear could feel anxious. But sometimes there doesn't seem to be any apparent reason for it and this can make it seem worse. Like "I don't know why I feel this way".

Fear is an important and useful emotional response to feeling unsafe. It triggers our fight or flight response so that we are driven to either fight our way out of the dangerous situation or run for survival. Then when the danger passes everything goes back to normal.

But when the threat is excessive such as in a highly traumatic experience or it can be more subtle over an extended period of time, then it becomes dis-functional. When the fight / flight response does not naturally resolve itself as it should when you return to a safe place then this is considered to be a 'freeze state'. A freeze is like a shock and the nervous system is unable to reset and come back to normal. A recurring and anticipated situation such as bullying at home, school or work, can feel like the threat that doesn't go away and there is no resolution. In families that are unstable or dysfunctional, the child will feel unsafe and the constant worry and stress with no way out, leads to feelings of hopelessness and powerlessness.

High achievers and perfectionists are also prone to anxiety. When high expectations are placed on a person either by family, school, university or work, this can cause performance anxiety. Expectations can also come from your friends and peers to keep up appearances or to fit in to the group. These pressures can also come from yourself. Putting higher expectations for yourself because you feel not good enough.

Our perception of our safety depends on our past experiences but the