



ANXIETY DISORDERS

TASK: Recognize warning signs and symptoms of Anxiety Disorders.

STANDARDS: Soldiers will understand how recognize signs of anxiety and better assist others when one may be having symptoms or showing signs of anxiety.



ANXIETY DISORDERS

There are many types of anxiety disorders that include panic disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, social anxiety disorder, specific phobias, and generalized anxiety disorder.

Anxiety is a normal human emotion that everyone experiences at times. Many people feel anxious, or nervous, when faced with a problem at work, before taking a test, or making an important decision. Anxiety disorders, however, are different. They can cause such distress that it interferes with a person's ability to lead a normal life.

An anxiety disorder is a serious mental illness. For people with anxiety disorders, worry and fear are constant and overwhelming, and can be crippling.



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Panic disorder : People with this condition have feelings of terror that strike suddenly and repeatedly with no warning. Other symptoms of a panic attack include sweating, chest pain, palpitations (irregular heartbeats), and a feeling of choking, which may make the person feel like he or she is having a heart attack or "going crazy."

Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) : People with OCD are plagued by constant thoughts or fears that cause them to perform certain rituals or routines. The disturbing thoughts are called obsessions, and the rituals are called compulsions. An example is a person with an unreasonable fear of germs who constantly washes his or her hands.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) : PTSD is a condition that can develop following a traumatic and/or terrifying event, such as a sexual or physical assault, the unexpected death of a loved one, or a natural disaster. People with PTSD often have lasting and frightening thoughts and memories of the event and tend to be emotionally numb.

Social anxiety disorder : Also called social phobia, social anxiety disorder involves overwhelming worry and self-consciousness about everyday social situations. The worry often centers on a fear of being judged by others, or behaving in a way that might cause embarrassment or lead to ridicule.

Specific phobias : A specific phobia is an intense fear of a specific object or situation, such as snakes, heights, or flying. The level of fear is usually inappropriate to the situation and may cause the person to avoid common, everyday situations.

Generalized anxiety disorder : This disorder involves excessive, unrealistic worry and tension, even if there is little or nothing to provoke the anxiety.



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Symptoms vary depending on the type of anxiety disorder, but general symptoms include:

- Feelings of panic, fear, and uneasiness
- Uncontrollable, obsessive thoughts
- Repeated thoughts or flashbacks of traumatic experiences
- Nightmares
- Ritualistic behaviors, such as repeated hand washing
- Problems sleeping
- Cold or sweaty hands and/or feet
- Shortness of breath
- Palpitations
- An inability to be still and calm
- Dry mouth
- Numbness or tingling in the hands or feet
- Nausea
- Muscle tension
- Dizziness



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Fortunately, much progress has been made in the last two decades in the treatment of people with mental illnesses, including anxiety disorders. Although the exact treatment approach depends on the type of disorder, one or a combination of the following therapies may be used for most anxiety disorders:

Medication : Drugs used to reduce the symptoms of anxiety disorders include anti-depressants and anxiety-reducing drugs.

Psychotherapy : Psychotherapy (a type of counseling) addresses the emotional response to mental illness. It is a process in which trained mental health professionals help people by talking through strategies for understanding and dealing with their disorder.

Cognitive-behavioral therapy: People suffering from anxiety disorders often participate in this type of psychotherapy in which the person learns to recognize and change thought patterns and behaviors that lead to troublesome feelings.

Relaxation therapy: When practiced regularly, relaxation techniques such as mindfulness meditation, progressive muscle relaxation, controlled breathing, and visualization can reduce anxiety and increase feelings of relaxation and emotional well-being.

Dietary and lifestyle changes



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Anxiety disorders cannot be prevented; however, there are some things you can do to control or lessen symptoms:

- Stop or reduce consumption of products that contain caffeine, such as coffee, tea, cola, energy drinks, and chocolate.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist before taking any over-the-counter medicines or herbal remedies. Many contain chemicals that can increase anxiety symptoms.
- Seek counseling and support after a traumatic or disturbing experience.