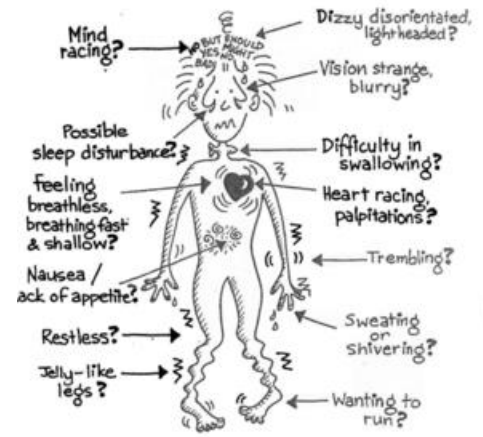




What is Anxiety?

Anxiety refers to feelings of worry, nervousness, or a sense of apprehension, typically about an upcoming event where the outcome is uncertain, or where the person feels they might not be up to the task. Anxiety is commonly experienced in high pressure situations, for example, prior to a making a speech or sitting an exam. Feelings of anxiety can also arise following a stressful event, like an accident where the person is left feeling shaken. Anxious feelings are usually accompanied by physical sensations such as a churning stomach, light headedness, and a racing heart.

While anxiety is considered a natural reaction to a stressful situation, for some people anxious thoughts, feelings, or physical symptoms can become severe and upsetting, interfering with their ability to go about their daily lives. Where symptoms of anxiety occur frequently, over a period of time, and interfere with daily life, it is typically considered an anxiety disorder. There are a number of different types of anxiety disorder, including Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD), Specific phobia, Panic Disorder, Agoraphobia, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), Social Anxiety Disorder, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).



Signs and Symptoms of Anxiety

The experience of anxiety will vary from person to person, however the common symptoms include:

- Feeling stressed and worried
- Having anxious thoughts
- Difficulty concentrating
- Restlessness
- Avoidance behaviour
- Rapid heartbeat
- Trembling or shaking
- Feeling lightheaded or faint
- Numbness or tingling sensations
- Upset stomach or nausea
- Sweating



What causes Anxiety Disorders?

While there is no single known cause of anxiety disorders, there are a number of risk factors or triggers that may contribute, including:

- **Genetics.** Certain anxiety disorders appear to have a genetic component.
- **Physical health.** Poor physical health can increase a person's vulnerability to developing symptoms of anxiety.
- **Thinking style.** Patterns of thinking characterised by anticipating the worst, persistent negative self-talk, low self-esteem, and unhelpful coping strategies.
- **Stress.** Stressful events such as a marriage breakdown, work or school deadlines, and financial hardship.

Treatment

Cognitive-behaviour therapy (CBT) has been found to be one of the most effective treatment for anxiety disorders. Using "Cognitive Restructuring" and "Behaviour Management" it can help an individual challenge and change unhelpful thoughts and behaviours which contribute to anxiety. Counselling can also include Problem Solving, Exposure Therapy, Mindfulness and Relaxation strategies. In addition, making simple lifestyle changes including regular exercise, lowering or eliminating alcohol and caffeine, engaging in enjoyable activities, improving time-management, and having adequate sleep can help to lower anxiety.

