

Anxiety

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Resilience Empowerment Compassion



What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is a psychological response to a feeling of fear, and as such, is an important 'alarm system'. Sometimes however, we can get an overwhelming sense of dread and fear for no apparent reason.

Some Facts About Anxiety

- Everyone experiences anxiety at times.
- Although anxiety feels uncomfortable, it cannot harm you.
- Occasions such as public speaking or a job interview can lead to feelings of anxiety.
- Learning about anxiety helps you to understand it and therefore manage it.
- The more you know about anxiety, the less fear and shame you will feel.
- When anxiety is intense or prolonged it can disrupt lives.
- Severe anxiety is estimated to affect approximately 1 in 10 people.
- Learning to manage anxiety can reduce symptoms and allow people to lead more satisfying lives.

Anxiety Symptoms and Disorders

Symptoms of anxiety can be physical, emotional or behavioral. They might include: racing heart, tight chest, rapid breathing, nausea, insomnia, muscle tension, fatigue, irritability, inability to concentrate and disinterest in life.

Panic Disorder is characterized by having panic attacks; periods of intense fear that often strike without warning. Symptoms may include: shortness of breath, tight chest, racing heart and dizziness.

Generalized Anxiety Disorder is characterized by unrealistic or excessive worry about routine life events, for at least six months. Symptoms may include: irritability, nausea, insomnia, muscle tension and fatigue.

Phobias are divided into two categories: social phobias, which involve fear of social situations and specific phobias, such as fear of heights or fear of flying.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder can affect individuals who have survived or witnessed a severe trauma such as war, assault, accident or a natural disaster. Symptoms can include reliving the event, nightmares, depression and irritability.

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder is a condition in which people experience unwanted thoughts (obsessions) and/or rituals (compulsions) which are difficult to control. Obsessions involve a fear of contamination or fear of leaving something undone that may cause harm (ex: leaving the stove on) while compulsions include excessive hand washing, organizing or repetitive checking.

Managing Anxiety

It is important not to disregard symptoms that may indicate you are experiencing anxiety in your life.

If you believe that you are living with anxiety, the following suggestions may be helpful:

- Get to know your anxiety. Acknowledge it when it comes. Pay close attention to how

and when it affects you. Also pay attention to what helps you manage your anxiety.

- Focus on something interesting and engaging: a hobby, a project, an activity that you enjoy.
- Take good care of yourself by practicing relaxation, eating well and getting plenty of rest.
- Exercise regularly.
- Avoid beverages that contain caffeine.
- Avoid alcohol and drugs.
- Surround yourself with support. Spend time with your spouse, children, parents, colleagues, friends and neighbours.
- Slow down. Don't over-commit to doing things.
- Try not to over think situations.

If these strategies for managing your anxiety are not working for you, get professional help. The main approaches used to manage anxiety are:

- cognitive behavioural therapy
- medication
- a combination of both

General methods will include learning about the mechanisms of anxiety, learning relaxation techniques, challenging anxious thoughts and facing fears.

We Can Help.

The Employee Assistance Program can:

- help people identify symptoms of anxiety
- help people develop a plan of action for managing anxiety

- refer people to self-help programs and specialized services for managing and treating anxiety
- provide support and education about anxiety

Resources

Suggested Reading

- 10 Simple Solutions to Panic. Martin Antony and Randi McCabe
- 10 Simple Solutions to Worry. Kevin Gyoerkoe & Pamela Wiegartz
- The Anxiety and Phobia Workbook. E. Bourne
- The Anxiety Cure. Robert Dupont
- Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway. Susan Jeffers
- How to Stop Worrying & Start Living. Dale Carnegie

Organizations and Websites

- Anxiety Disorders Association of Manitoba: 204-925-0600
- Anxiety Disorders Clinic at St. Boniface Hospital: 204-237-2335
- Anxiety Disorders Clinic at Health Sciences Centre: 204-787-3345
- Anxiety BC Self-Help Toolkit: www.anxietybc.com

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