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ANXIETY

IN YOUNG PEOPLE

What you need to know

ankrayouth.org



Anxiety in young people

Anxiety is something that everyone experiences from time to time. It is our body's normal reaction to perceived danger or important events. We know everyone faces challenges in their life – that's normal, but for some young people, feelings of anxiety begin to interfere with their life. The feelings last for longer than a few weeks and they change the way a person spends their time. On average, one in three women and one in five men will experience anxiety in their lifetime.

Although anxiety protects us in the face of real danger, it can become a problem when it...

- Goes off when there is no real or immediate danger (e.g., like a smoke alarm that goes off when you're just making toast)
- Happens a lot
- Feels pretty intense
- Is upsetting and causes you distress
- Stops you from doing fun and important things (e.g., like going to school dances or parties, making friends or dating, getting your homework done, or getting a job or your driver's license).

How do you know if you have anxiety?

Though each anxiety condition has its own unique features, there are some common symptoms including:

Behaviour

- Withdrawing from, avoiding or fearing objects or situations which cause anxiety
- Urges to perform certain rituals in a bid to relieve anxiety
- Not being assertive (e.g. avoiding eye contact)
- Difficulty making decisions
- Safety cautious (e.g. frightened to be alone)

Feelings

- Overwhelmed
- Fear (particularly when having to face certain objects, situations or events)
- Excessive worry about physical symptoms/medical problems
- Dread that something bad will happen
- Constantly tense, nervous or on edge
- Uncontrollable or overwhelming panic.

Thoughts

- "I'm going crazy."
- "I can't control myself"
- "I'm about to die."
- "People are judging me."
- Finding it hard to stop worrying
- Unwanted or intrusive thoughts
- Having upsetting dreams or flashbacks
- Feeling detached from your physical self

Physical

- Increased heart rate/racing heart
- Shortness of breath
- Vomiting, nausea or pain in the stomach
- Dizzy, lightheaded or faint
- Muscle tension and pain (e.g. sore back)
- Having trouble sleeping
- Sweating, shaking, numbness or tingling
- Hot or cold flushes

What are the different types of anxiety?

Generalised Anxiety Disorder

A person feels anxious on most days, worrying about lots of different things, for a period of six months or more.

Social Anxiety

A person has an intense fear of being criticised, embarrassed or humiliated, even in everyday situations, such as speaking publicly, eating in public, being assertive at work or making small talk.

Panic Disorder

A person has panic attacks, which are intense, overwhelming and often uncontrollable feelings of anxiety combined with a range of physical symptoms. Someone having a panic attack may experience shortness of breath, chest pain, dizziness and excessive perspiration.

Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)

A person has ongoing unwanted and/or intrusive thoughts and fears that cause anxiety. Although the person may acknowledge these thoughts as silly, they often try to relieve their anxiety by carrying out certain behaviours or rituals. For example, a fear of germs and contamination can lead to constant washing of hands and clothes.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

This can happen any time from one month after a traumatic event (e.g. war, assault, accident, disaster). Symptoms can include difficulty relaxing, upsetting dreams or

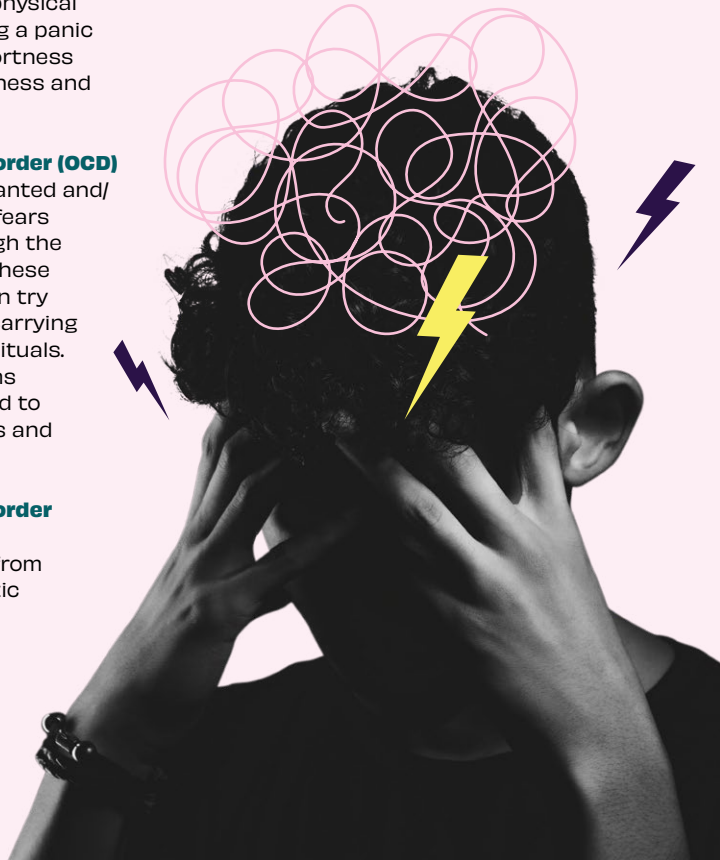
flashbacks, avoidance of anything related to the event, and sometimes feeling emotionally numb.

Why do people develop anxiety?

An anxiety condition isn't developed or caused by a single factor but a combination of things. A number of other factors play a role, including personality factors, difficult life experiences and physical health.

Treatments for anxiety

There are various treatments for anxiety but the main treatment is psychological (talking) therapies.



There are different treatment approaches used by health professionals but the ones known to be especially helpful to treat anxiety (and depression) are cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), dialectical behavioural therapy (DBT), interpersonal therapy and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy.

Some other treatments include:

- Medical treatments
- Anxiety management strategies

Different techniques work for different people so it's helpful to try out various strategies and see what works for you.

Recovery and staying well

Recovery can take time. While psychological and/or medical

treatment can help, there are many ways people can help themselves recover and stay well, such as:

- learning to reduce and manage stress
- keeping up daily routines and scheduling fun feel-good activities that give a sense of achievement
- maintaining a healthy lifestyle
- cutting back on alcohol and other drugs
- recognising triggers and warning signs
- getting over setbacks.

Anxiety is not a sign of personal weakness nor is it something you can just 'snap out of'. If you think anxiety might be a problem for you it's important to reach out to others/professionals for help.



ANKRA is a project set up by Richmond for young people affected by mental health problems in Malta.

We are here to provide help, information and support.

Helpline: 1770

Helpchat: www.oli.chat

**info@ankrayouth.org
ankrayouth.org**

Useful support:

www.oli.chat

Richmond's free, 24/7 webchat offering emotional support and practical guidance.

kellimni.com

A free, 24/7 support service managed by SOS Malta.

Aġenzija Żgħażaġh

Provides youths with a safe space to express views, needs and concerns.

Youth in Focus Service

Provides social work intervention to adolescents and young persons.

