



SCI-BONO  
DISCOVERY CENTRE  
SCIENCE CAREER CENTRE

## Anxiety



## What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is hardwired into our brains. It is a part of the body's fight-or-flight response, which prepares us to act quickly in the face of danger. It is a normal response to situations of uncertainty, trouble or feeling unprepared. However, if common everyday events bring on severe and persistent anxiety or panic that interferes with life, you may have an anxiety disorder.

## What is the Difference Between Feeling Anxious and an Anxiety Disorder?

### ITS OK TO EXPERIENCE...

Occasional worry about circumstantial events, such as an exam or breakup, that may leave you upset.

### VS

Constant, chronic and unsubstantiated worry that causes significant distress in areas of your life.

### ITS OK TO EXPERIENCE...

Embarrassment or self-consciousness in the face of an uncomfortable social situation.

### VS

Avoidance of common social situations for fear of being judged, embarrassed or humiliated .

### ITS OK TO EXPERIENCE...

Random cases of "nerves" or jitters, dizziness or sweating over an exam, oral presentation, or other important event.

### VS

Repeated, random panic attacks or persistent worry and anticipation.

### ITS OK TO EXPERIENCE...

Realistic fear of a threatening object, place or situation.

### VS

Irrational fear or avoidance of an object, place or situation that poses little or no threat of danger.

### ITS OK TO EXPERIENCE...

Wanting to be sure that you are healthy, and living in a safe, hazard-free environment.

### VS

Ongoing and recurring nightmares, flashbacks, or emotional numbing relating to a traumatic event

**If you can relate to any of these descriptions of anxiety and related disorders, talk to someone who can help.**

# The ABCs of Anxiety Disorders

## Generalized anxiety disorders (GAD):

Excessive uncontrollable worry about everyday issues, including school, work, money, friends, and health

## Social anxiety disorder:

Avoidance of everyday social situations due to extreme anxiety about being judged by others or behaving in a way that might cause embarrassment or ridicule.

## Panic disorder:

Severe attacks of terror, which may feel like you're having a heart attack or going crazy for no apparent reason.

## Agoraphobia:

Intense fear and anxiety of any place or situation where escape might be difficult, leading to avoidance of situations such as being alone outside of the home; travelling in a car, bus, or airplane; or being in a crowded area.

## Specific phobias:

Intense fear reaction that leads to avoiding and object, place, or situation such as riding in elevators or driving on bridges; those with specific phobias typically recognize that their fear is irrational and inappropriate for the circumstance.

## Selective mutism:

A consistent failure to speak in specific social situations by someone who is normally capable of speech.

## Separation anxiety:

Inappropriate and excessive fear or anxiety when faced with separation from the home or from specific people

**Obsessive-compulsive disorder and posttraumatic stress disorder** are closely related to anxiety disorders, which some may experience at the same time.

## Got Anxiety?

### STRESS BUSTERS

Whether you have normal anxiety or an anxiety disorder, OCD or PTSD, these strategies will help you cope:

- **Exercise.** Physical activity helps your body and mind. Just get moving!
- **Eat a balanced diet.** Try to eat from all of the food groups. Try to minimize soda and coffee because caffeine can trigger anxiety and panic attacks
- **Limit alcohol and stay away from illegal drugs.** Alcohol and drugs aggravate anxiety and can also cause panic attacks.
- **Get involved.** Being active in the community creates a support network and gives you a break from everyday stress
- **Take time out.** Take a deep breath and count to 10. Steeping back from a problem lets you clear your head
- **Put things in perspective.** Think about your situation. Ask yourself whether it's really as bad as you think it is or you could be blowing it out of proportion
- **Talk to someone.** Don't bottle up emotions to the verge of explosion. Reach out to people or a counsellor if you're feeling low
- **Find out what triggers your anxiety.** Take notes or write in a journal when you're feeling anxious or stressed, and then look for patterns.



## Life Can Be Stressful!

Between school, work, friends, family, you are pulled in in different directions. What's worse, all of these responsibilities take away from the time you might need to take care of yourself. Add to that the physical and developmental changes, and it's easy to see how you might become anxious. Anxiety is a normal reaction to life-changing events. We all get stressed out or anxious, but most of us bounce back. But anxiety that is so frequent, intense, and uncontrollable that it hinders daily routines may be a sign of an anxiety disorder. Take time to figure out whether the anxiety you are experiencing is the same anxiety we all have occasionally or whether it is so persistent and severe that it may be an anxiety disorder.

## How We Can Help

**Please contact the Science Career Centre at Sci-Bono Discovery Centre for further information:**

**Telephone:** 011 639- 8400 (switchboard) or 8479 / 8450 / 8434

**Visit:** Science Career Centre, Sci-Bono Discovery Centre

**Physical Address:** Corner of Miriam Makeba and Helen Joseph Streets, Newtown, Johannesburg

**Website Address:** [www.sci-bono.co.za](http://www.sci-bono.co.za)

**E-mail:** [admin.careers@sci-bono.co.za](mailto:admin.careers@sci-bono.co.za)

