



SA Federation for
Mental Health

ANXIETY DISORDERS

GENERALISED ANXIETY DISORDER

What it is:

Generalised anxiety disorder is characterized by excessive anxiety and worry about a number of different events or activities. The worry typically revolves around everyday life events or tasks, such as responsibilities at work or at home, the health of a loved one, or minor matters such as being late for an appointment. The level of anxiety and worry experienced is always out of proportion to the actual threat or negative impact that the event or situation may have. Individuals with generalised anxiety disorder may find that their focus shifts from one topic of concern and anxiety to another, and that they are unable to prevent themselves from worrying about these matters. Generalised anxiety disorder differs from the anxiety and worry that most people experience at some point during their lives, as the disorder interferes significantly with the individuals psychological functioning. The disorder also presents with physical symptoms such as fatigue, muscle tension and disturbed sleep.

Common symptoms:

1. Excessive worry and anxiety, occurring most days for a period of at least six months, about a number of events or activities
2. The individual is unable to control their anxiety or worry
3. The anxiety and worry are also associated with at least 3 (1 in the case of children) of the following physical symptoms:
4. Restlessness
5. Feeling fatigued or getting tired easily
6. Difficulty concentrating
7. Irritability
8. Muscle tension
9. Difficulty falling or staying asleep

Remember to always consult a mental health or medical practitioner regarding any questions you may have about a mental health diagnosis and treatment options.

This factsheet is based on information obtained from the DSM-5:
American Psychiatric Association, 2013. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition.*

Causes:

There are a number of factors that can contribute to the development of generalised anxiety disorder. Behavioural inhibition, negative affectivity and harm avoidance have all been associated with the disorder. Although childhood adversities or parental overprotection have been linked to the disorder in the past, research has identified no clear environmental factors that contribute to the development of generalised anxiety disorder. Genetics do play an important role, as one third of the risk of developing generalised anxiety disorder is genetic.



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