

Introduction

We all feel a bit stressed at times. Before a significant event such as a driving test, an exam, a medical test, or maybe a meeting of presentation at work, we feel “nervous”. This feeling usually passes during or after the event is over. Most people feel like this and have experienced anxiety in this way.

For some people however these feelings of anxiety don’t pass and/or are so severe that they interfere with their daily lives. Sometimes this makes it difficult to go to particular places or take part in particular events.

Anxiety can affect people of all ages, is fairly common and is a recognised medical condition – it’s not a sign of weakness.

Signs

- Impatience, anger, confusion
- Decreased concentration and memory
- Mind racing or going blank
- Restlessness, feeling “on edge”
- Muscle aches and pains
- Feeling sick
- Wanting to go to the toilet a lot
- Difficulty sleeping
- Headache, sweating, dizziness, tingling, numbness
- Shortness of breath
- Flushing, rapid heartbeat, chest pains
- Palpitations

Causes

There is no single known cause of anxiety. It is thought that anxiety could be related to traumatic life events, such as abuse, bereavement, divorce, or as result of transitions through different stages in life e.g. changing jobs or school. Anxiety is sometimes linked to depression. There is some evidence that family history plays a part in anxiety and also that it may be related to brain chemistry.

How to Help Yourself

It is important to take control of your thoughts and think positively. Be aware of negative thoughts that may cause you to feel anxious and replace them with positive and optimistic thoughts. Give yourself credit. Other things that can help include:

- Keeping a diary and being aware of what triggers your anxiety
- Eat healthy foods
- Avoid caffeine, alcohol, tobacco and other drugs

- Be good to yourself – take time out each day to relax
- Take regular exercise
- Breathing in through the nose and out through the mouth
- Think of an image that makes you feel relaxed and good
- Talk to someone you trust about how you are feeling
- Talk to your GP about how you are feeling

How to Help Someone Who is Anxious

- Listen to what the person is saying and let them talk about how they are feeling
- Listen to them about how you can help
- Teach yourself about anxiety and how you can help
- Help the person eat healthily, sleep well and take regular exercise
- Be hopeful and positive and fun to be around
- Don't tell the person to "snap out of it" or "pull yourself together" – this doesn't help and won't work
- Help the person find good professional help if needed
- Look after yourself too

Useful Contacts:

No Panic

Helpline: **0844 967 4848**

www.nopanic.org.uk

Anxiety UK

User-led website and helpline providing information and support.

Helpline: **08444 775 774**

www.anxietyuk.org.uk



Penumbra is a leading Scottish voluntary organisation working in the field of mental health. We provide an extensive range of person-centred support services for adults and young people.

We also campaign to raise awareness of mental health issues and reduce the social stigma attached to them.

If you would like more information or have any further questions about any other Penumbra services please contact:

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