

Anxiety

What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a part of normal human existence. Everyone has been tense before a big test or performing in front of a crowd. It's hard wired into our system to protect us through the "fight or flight" reflex. For some people these experiences are isolated, but for others anxiety is a constant and domineering force that controls and impairs their whole being.

Signs and Symptoms of Anxiety

- unrealistic or excessive worry
- unrealistic fears about objects or situations
- exaggerated startle reflex
- sweatiness
- cold, clammy hands
- dizziness
- racing or pounding heart
- dry mouth
- upset stomach
- rapid pulse or breathing

Causes of Anxiety

Anxiety affects our whole being. It affects how we think, feel, behave and has physical symptoms. It feels like fear, but you don't know what you're frightened of. Anxiety can be triggered by stress in our lives. Often times negative self-talk can make anxiety worse by assuming the worst. Anxiety is a problem if it interferes with life in the absence of a real threat, or goes on too long after the danger has passed.

Managing Anxiety

One way to control anxiety is by learning to control your level of stress. Relaxation techniques such as meditation or listening to relaxation tapes are also helpful. Looking

after your well-being through exercise and a healthy diet and maintaining regular sleep patterns will alleviate some of the symptoms as well. Avoid alcohol, cannabis products or caffeine which can cause you to feel jittery or nervous. Deep breathing exercises have also proven effective at relieving feelings of anxiety.

Interventions

Talking with a counselor is one of the best ways to deal with anxiety. Counseling will:

- help you learn what may trigger your feelings of anxiety
- help you learn to relax through deep breathing or relaxation techniques
- help expose you to the events that are causing you anxiety
- help you recognize when you are beginning to feel anxious, and how to handle and/or prevent those feelings or thoughts.

Medication may be needed in severe cases, which would require consultation with your doctor. Also, symptoms may begin to diminish on their own with age.

Getting Help

If you are concerned about someone who is presenting these symptoms or behaviors, one should be aware that there are many facilities and a variety of counselors to help individuals deal with anxiety. If you are a University of Louisiana Lafayette student or faculty and are concerned and would like to speak to a counselor, please contact the Counseling and Testing center at 482-6480 for more information. The center offers unlimited confidential sessions free of charge to all student and university faculty/staff members.

