

ANXIETY

WHAT IS ANXIETY?

Anxiety is a mental and physical response to situations we may think of as a threat. However, sometimes we are anxious and we can't even identify the threat.

It is normal to feel worried or stressed from time to time. We are nervous before an exam or public speaking; a stressful situation at school or work can produce a physical reaction. Usually this feeling passes quickly.

When fear and worry last for weeks or months or are out of proportion to the situation, anxiety can begin to interfere with daily life, family, school or work. Anxiety can keep you from enjoying life and all it has to offer.

Anxiety has three parts and it varies from person to person.

1. Do you frequently experience some of these thoughts/feelings?

- Feeling tense, jumpy, frightened, “freaked out”
- Excessive worry and apprehension
- Afraid that something awful is going to happen to you or a loved one.
- Panicked, fear of ‘going crazy’, fear of dying or losing control
- Feelings of unreality
- Difficulty concentrating on the task at hand, difficulty remembering

2. Does your body often feel like this? (symptoms can vary in intensity and from person to person)

- Trembling, shaking
- Sweating
- Heart pounding, chest pain or discomfort
- Light headed, dizzy
- Tense muscles, muscle aches and pains
- Feeling sick to your stomach
- Hard to get your breath
- Stomach pains
- Tingling in the hands /feet
- Numbness
- Hot or cold flashes
- Urge to pass water frequently or move your bowels

3. Behaviors

- Wanting to avoid situations that make you anxious
- Frequently seeking reassurance
- Performing rituals in order to feel less anxious such as counting, cleaning, or repeating behaviors
- Escaping from certain situations in order to feel better even though there is no apparent reason to feel threatened

WHAT CAN I DO?

- **Learn more about anxiety**
You have already begun taking the first step, which is to learn more about anxiety and about resources that will help you to manage anxiety symptoms. The more that you know about anxiety, the less scary it becomes. Remember that there are many options available for those who wish to better manage their anxiety.
- **Use your breath.** When we feel anxious we hold our breath and this makes matters worse. Regularly slow down breathing by counting 1.2.3 as you breathe in and 1.2.3. as you breathe out.
- **Challenge your thinking.** Learn to replace negative thoughts with more supportive messages to yourself. Support yourself as you would your friend or loved one.
- **Relaxation techniques.** Find something that works for you. It could be going for a walk, yoga, acupuncture, meditation, music
- **See your Doctor.** If your issues are causing significant problems for you and your family, call your doctor or mental health professional to learn more. Medication may help as you learn ways to manage your anxiety.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit our website at: www.mentalhealthsouthshore.ca

Visit the website: www.heretohelp.bc.ca and download their anxiety disorders toolkit

WHERE CAN I GET HELP?

Your family doctor or mental health professional can help you learn techniques to manage your anxiety. A professional can see you individually or you could join a group educational session.

Call the Mental Health Program, South Shore Health for an appointment or information on free acupuncture or group programs.

**Mental Health Program, South Shore Health
Dawson Centre, Level 2
197 Dufferin Street
Bridgewater, Nova Scotia
B4V 2G9**

527-5228 Monday to Friday (except holidays) 8:30-4:30

www.mentalhealthsouthshore.ca

