

Anxiety, Triggering Factors and Coping Strategies

Anxiety is one of the most disturbing feelings people experience. It is sometimes described as feelings of fear or panic.

The word 'anxiety' describes a series of the disorders including:

- * **Phobias** (fear of certain things or situations such as height, elevators, planes, etc.),
- * **Panic attacks** (intense anxiety that people feel as if they are dying or about to lose their mind),
- * **Post-traumatic stress disorder** (recall of terrible trauma memories with high levels of distress),
- * **Obsessive-compulsive disorder** (constantly doing or thinking about certain things) and
- * **A generalized anxiety disorder** (concern and anxiety that is often experienced).

We also use the word 'anxiety' to describe short periods of nervousness or fear of challenging life events.

Anxious individuals; may have physical symptoms such as excessive irritability, tension, sweating in the palms, dizziness, difficulty in breathing, increased heartbeat, and facial fever/burning.

Along with anxiety, many biological changes occur in our bodies. By stimulating the amygdala part of our brain, our breathing and heart rate increase, and more oxygen is supplied to the muscles, allowing them to be physically prepared for the dangerous state. This natural impulse, which was developed in the early ages to escape from a predatory animal or a dangerous natural event and survive, can be triggered very often with daily worries in our personal and professional lives.

Today, our work and school life can be triggered by factors such as not being able to complete a project or task given to us or not being able to pay our debt, school change, health anxiety, and economic worries.

Important events in our lives can cause anxiety as well. Examples of such events include challenging life events (being exposed to physical violence, having a car accident, being in a war, illness or death, and experiences that seem difficult to deal with such as speaking in front of the community).

Today, it is quite natural that individuals are affected by the COVID-19 process with an increase in the number of COVID-19 cases.

COVID-19 threatens individuals' lives, may cause anxiety, and may result in deterioration, change or restriction in their daily routines such as not going out, not being able to use public transportation, disruption of private life and not going to school/work.

This situation can negatively affect the emotional state of individuals.

How can we cope with COVID-19 process?

During this period that we need to stay at home for our health, we should be in touch with our loved ones; share our concerns; pay attention to our diet and sleep patterns; plan how we spend our time; make sure that we get the right information on the subject (from an official source); avoid false information, and even if we are at home, we have to do our regular activities.

How can we cope with our anxiety?

- * Question your thoughts (Find out what triggers your concern; work, family, school or something else you can describe?)
- * Do breathing exercises (try breathing by slowly counting up to 4 for 4 minutes and trying to exhale slowly by counting up to 4).
- * Make time for yourself (do yoga, listen to music, meditate, or learn relaxation techniques).
- * Write your thoughts (Anxiety diary can be kept, moments when we feel good / bad can be noted).
- * Keep your body and mind healthy (regular exercise, eating balanced meals, sleeping enough and staying connected with people, etc.).
- * Limit alcohol and caffeine consumption as they aggravate anxiety.
- * Accept that you cannot control everything
- * Include humor in your life (Have a good laugh).
- * Have a positive attitude (strive to replace the negative thoughts with positive thoughts).
- * Share your concerns with someone else (Tell your friends and family that you are overwhelmed and let them know how they can help you. You can also get professional help).

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