

Anxiety

Have you ever experienced your heart pounding and a queasy feeling in your stomach when you have an important deadline to meet? Do you feel tense and have a feeling of impending doom when your significant other says, "we have to talk?" If you have, these are all normal symptoms of anxiety.

Anxiety is not necessarily a bad thing. Anxiety is what motivates us to do a good job on a project, study for a test, or strive to do our best. Rapid breathing, quickening pulse, queasy stomach is all part of normal anxiety that is an essential part of our lives. If it were not for this type of anxiety, man would never have evolved because anxiety is part of the "fight or flight" survival system incorporated into our genetic makeup. We no longer have to fear attacks from wild animals, but a modern day example of this type of anxiety may be experienced on the highway when another vehicle suddenly swerves in front of you. Instantly, your senses are on overdrive, blood races and you automatically do whatever you can to protect yourself.

However, anxiety can also go beyond what is necessary to survive today's highway system, a case of stage fright, or a trip to the in-laws house. Anxiety can cripple you. Making it impossible to make a presentation at work, confront someone, or function in day to day tasks.

Most of us are familiar with the term "Panic Attack". A panic attack is described as a specific period of time when intense fear or discomfort occurs along with any of the following:

- Palpitations, pounding heart, or accelerated heart rate
- Sweating
- Trembling or shaking
- Feeling short of breath or smothering
- Feelings of choking
- Chest pain or discomfort
- Nausea or abdominal distress
- Feeling dizzy, unsteady, lightheaded or faint
- Feelings of unreality or being detached from yourself
- Fear of losing control, going crazy, or dying
- Numbness or tingling sensations
- Chills or hot flushes

While many of us have experienced some of these symptoms at some point in our life during a stressful situation, repeated occurrences, especially when no specific reason for the stress can be identified, need to be evaluated by a mental health professional. Please also note that since extreme anxiety often appears as physical symptoms, it is strongly recommended that you be examined by your medical doctor to rule out any medical problems.

Panic attacks are only a piece of the anxiety puzzle. There are four additional types of anxiety. Generalized Anxiety Disorder, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, Post-Traumatic Stress disorder, and Phobias all fall into this category. Anxiety disorders are real, they are very serious and they are treatable. We have provided several resources that you may find helpful in understanding more about anxiety and associated treatments available. These are not a substitute for an evaluation by a physician and a behavioral health professional. It is important to work with behavioral health professionals who can specifically assess your situation and tailor treatment to your particular needs. **Please call CONCERN at 513-891-1627, or 800-642-9794 outside of the Cincinnati area, for confidential assistance** with assessment, short-term counseling or referral to an appropriate treatment provider in your insurance network.

BOOKS:

Mind over mood: Change how you feel by changing the way you think. By Dennis Greenberger and Christine Padesky

The Anxiety and Phobia Handbook by Edward Bourne

The Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook by Davis, Robbins, Eshelman, McKay

WEB SITES:

<http://www.panicattacks.com>

Anxiety Panic Hub - Take back the Power! This web site contains information about the symptoms of anxiety/panic and contains a useful checklist to help you determine if you need to seek treatment.

www.crufad.unsw.edu.au/K0/thetest.htm is another web site that has a checklist to help you determine if you should seek professional help.

<http://mentalhelp.net> is a search engine where you can research anxiety disorders (and other mental health issues). It is informative, clearly written and provides valuable information.

www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/anxiety.cfm is a government sponsored web site that provides information on anxiety, panic disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, social phobia, specific phobias and generalized anxiety disorder