

GENERALISED ANXIETY DISORDER

JUN 11TH, 2020 | MENTAL WELLBEING

What is the difference between a normal amount of worry and an anxiety disorder?

Life can be unpredictable and it's normal to experience some level of worry, anxiety, stress or alertness in the face of challenges, be it related to relationships, deadlines, exams or making that important meeting in time despite traffic. We would normally shift back into a more relaxed state after you've resolved the challenge.



In contrast to this, people with generalised anxiety disorder have incessant and unrealistic anxiety every day and most of the time for no reason in particular. This persistent anxiety is accompanied by a prolonging of the body's stress response with a negative effect on our mental and physical health. Most people with generalised anxiety disorder can't remember the last time that they felt 'normal' or relaxed.

What is generalised anxiety disorder?

Generalised anxiety disorder is a condition that makes you feel extraordinarily anxious about more than one issue and affects you in the long term. The anxiety experienced is felt across a range of situations and because it's difficult for you to control, it influences many parts of your life.

The disorder is nothing to be ashamed of and is one of the most common mental health challenges that people face globally.

Generalised anxiety disorder can have a detrimental influence on your thoughts, behaviour and even your general health and wellbeing. It's characterized by intense feelings of worry, that are not easy to control, that can last for weeks, months, years or even your entire lifetime.

These feelings of anxiety interfere with our daily lives and functioning and make it difficult to manage 'normal' challenges. Sometimes you may even realise that the anxiety you feel is unrealistic and has no base, but are unable to stop the way you feel. Persistent anxiety caused by this disorder can be physically and emotionally exhausting.

What are the symptoms of generalised anxiety disorder?

If you have this disorder, you may have:

- Worry that may seem irrelevant or frivolous to others
- Racing thoughts
- Constantly needing to double check things
- Persistent thoughts that do not just go away
- Avoiding people and places, even objects
- Restlessness, agitation or irritability
- Difficulty concentrating
- Trouble sleeping.

If you feel anxiety that is persistent, excessive or routinely triggered by situations that others may not perceive as threatening, or if you experience any symptoms related to panic disorder, then visit your doctor and share your symptoms to get the support you need.

How generalised anxiety disorder is diagnosed

Only a doctor, psychologist or psychiatrist can diagnose generalised anxiety disorder. If you experience any of the symptoms above and if they cause significant distress and impairment in your daily functioning, then visit your doctor.

When it comes to generalised anxiety disorder, the earlier the intervention, the better your outcomes. Contact your doctor, psychologist or psychiatrist for support and intervention. They may suggest a combination of some of the below:

- **Medicine.** Consult with your doctor or psychiatrist to explore this approach.
- **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT).** This form of therapy has evidence-based proof of success in the treatment of Generalised Anxiety Disorder as it can give us cognitive and behavioural tools to help manage anxiety, regulate and reposition stress responses, thought patterns and behavioural responses. It is a short-term (or time-limited) approach that focuses on how we think and what we do, and how the combination of these leads to certain experiences.
- **Exercise** and movement
- **Mindfulness** techniques
- **Relaxation** techniques
- **Stress-management** techniques
- Addressing your **sleep** quality and quantity
- Healthy **nutrition**
- **Connecting** with people you trust



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