

Generalised Anxiety Disorder Screener (GAD-7)

Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered with any of the following problems?

| | | <i>Not at all</i> | <i>Several days</i> | <i>More than half the days</i> | <i>Nearly every day</i> |
|----|--|-------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. | Feeling nervous, anxious or on edge. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 2. | Not being able to stop or control worrying. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 3. | Worrying too much about different things. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4. | Trouble relaxing. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 5. | Being so restless that it is hard to sit still. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 6. | Becoming easily annoyed or irritated. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 7. | Feeling afraid as if something awful might happen. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| | TOTAL | | | | |

If you checked off any problems, how difficult have these problems made it for you to do your work, take care of things at home, or get along with other people?

| | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| Not difficult at all <input type="checkbox"/> | Somewhat difficult <input type="checkbox"/> | Very difficult <input type="checkbox"/> | Extremely difficult <input type="checkbox"/> |
|--|--|--|---|

When did the symptoms begin? _____

Developed by Drs. Robert L. Spitzer, Janet B.W. Williams, Kurt Kroenke and colleagues, with an educational grant from Pfizer Inc. No permission required to reproduce, translate, display or distribute.

| Score | Description |
|-------|---------------------------|
| 1-5 | Mild anxiety |
| 6-10 | Moderate anxiety |
| 11-14 | Moderately-severe anxiety |
| 15+ | Severe anxiety |

Please contact PeopleSense (08) 9388 9000

A Healthcare Professional will be able to score and interpret your results with you.

What is Anxiety?



Anxiety is a feeling of worry, nervousness or unease about something with an uncertain outcome.

Anxiety affects us physically, as well as affects our thoughts and behaviours.

Anxiety is a normal response and is required to keep us safe from harm.

However, people with anxiety disorders may be unable to stop worrying about seemingly unimportant things.

They can perceive situation as far worse than they actually are and become exhausted by the anticipation of impending 'bad' events.

Anxiety can take over a person's life. It can interfere with relationships, disrupt work, impair self-perception and self-confidence and generally take the fun out of life.

Anxiety is very treatable, but treatment does take some effort.

It is unlikely to go away on its own unless the cause of the anxiety is very specific e.g. if you are anxious because your child is taking their year 12 exams, or you have an impending driving test, need to deliver a public speech etc. Once the event is over the anxiety should disappear. If it doesn't, or you find yourself transferring your worry to other life events, you may have an anxiety disorder.

Anxiety disorders are the most common form of mental disorders and affect approximately 14% of the population every year. Not all anxiety disorders are the same, however, one commonality is that they impact every day activities.

The most common types of anxiety we see at PeopleSense include the following:

Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD)

People with GAD feel anxious or worried most of the time, not just at time of stress. They may worry about everyday issues such as work, finances, or household chores, even if there is no real reason to worry about them. They can fixate on an area, such as family health, which leads to an uncontrollable feeling that something terrible will happen to loved ones. Many people with this condition describe continually feeling that something terrible is about to happen. To have a diagnosis of GAD a person must have experienced excessive worry to the point where every day activities are hard to carry out, for at least six months (on more days than not). People with GAD may also have related disorders, such as depression or the following anxiety disorders.

Social Phobia

People with social phobia find the focus of others attention extremely distressing. This does not mean only in situations where they maybe under scrutiny, such as public speaking, but also in general public places. People with social phobia may find it difficult to eat in public, or take part in social events with more than a handful of people, or find it hard to speak up at workplace meetings. The underlying fear is usually associated with an irrational fear of being embarrassed or humiliated in front of others.



Types of Anxiety Disorder

Panic Disorder (Panic Attacks)

Panic Disorder is where fear escalates rapidly to a level that a person finds hard to control. An attack usually peaks within ten minutes, but can last much longer. They can occur at any time during the day and even during sleep.

Panic attacks are characterised by intense physical symptoms, such as, pounding heart, sweating, chest/stomach pains, weakness, dizziness or hot and cold chills. People often feel out of control during the attack and fear they may even die (due to restricted breathing). This can lead to increased worry about when the next attack will happen and avoidance of situations that may lead to a further.

If you suffer with panic disorder/panic attacks, be reassured, you will not die from an attack. However, panic disorder rarely disappears without some form of intervention. If you are experiencing the symptoms above, please see assistance from PeopleSense.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)



People experiencing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) have a condition of persistent mental and emotional distress as a result of an injury or severe psychological shock. Most experiences that cause PTSD threaten a person's life or the safety of those around them and lead to feelings of intense fear, helplessness or horror. Typically, the symptoms include disturbed sleep and vivid recall or re-living of the experience.

People with this condition often feel emotionally numb and cut off from the world, including friends and family. They may also be overly alert, or wound up and appear jumpy, irritable, or easily startled.

Other Anxiety Disorders

Anxiety can take many forms, depending on the experience and response of the individual. Other diagnoses include:

- Agoraphobia
- Acute Stress Disorder
- Specific Phobia/s
- Substance / Medication induced Anxiety Disorder
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Adjustment Disorder
- Selective Mutism
- Illness Anxiety Disorder
- Trichotillomania (Hair Pulling Disorder)
- Excoriation (Skin Picking Disorder)
- Separation Anxiety Disorder
- Reactive Attachment Disorder

Symptoms of Anxiety

We all experience anxiety in our own unique way. The most common symptoms of anxiety include:

Physical (Body)

- Racing heart
- Muscle Pain (from tension)
- Sweating
- Numb or tingly
- Pain in the stomach
- Tightening of the chest
- Easily tired
- Shallow breathing
- Choked
- Migraines / headaches
- Hot and cold flushes
- Dizziness
- Shakiness
- Derealisation (feel detached from your body or surroundings)
- Nausea or other digestive issues

Cognitive (Thoughts)

- Snowballing worries
- Find it hard to stop worrying
- Scared of going crazy
- Scared of dying (from anxiety or panic, i.e. when there is no confirmed medical reasons)
- On guard or easily startled
- Fear about the future
- Fear that something bad will happen
- Repetitive thoughts about things that haven't (and wont) happen
- Catastrophe thoughts (eg my heart skipped a beat, I must be having a heart attack. My Manager looked at me funny, I must be about to lose my job etc.)

Behaviour

- Problems with concentration
- Disturbed sleep (either falling asleep, staying asleep or restless sleep)
- Finding it hard to complete everyday tasks
- Avoidance of situations that may cause anxiety (e.g. work, social situations, friends, health checks)
- Ritualised behaviours (e.g. constantly washing hands, checking or cleaning)
- Overreacting to situations (may look like fear, anger, irritability)

What Causes Anxiety?

Family History

People who have a history of mental health problems in their family are more likely to develop anxiety. This may be due to a genetic vulnerability, or as a result of learned behaviour from family members. It does not mean that because you have a family history of the condition that you *will* develop, it just increases your chances.

Medical Causes

For some, anxiety may be linked to an underlying medical condition. It can trigger anxiety, or complicate the treatment of the medical condition.

Medical conditions with known links to anxiety include:

- Diabetes
- Asthma
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Thyroid problems (such as hypothyroidism or Hyperthyroidism)
- Hormonal issues (including premenstrual syndrome and menopause)
- Withdrawal from alcohol, or anti-anxiety medication and other medications
- Drug abuse or withdrawal
- Heart Disease

Personality Factors

Some people seem to be predisposed to anxiety due to their personality. People who are perfectionist and set very high standards, often experience anxiety. Also people who need to control, are ambitious and have a tendency to ignore stress symptoms may develop anxiety. Conversely, people with a tendency to low self-esteem and low drive may also develop anxiety. Where personality is involved, it is likely to be due to a combination of factors.

Stressful Events

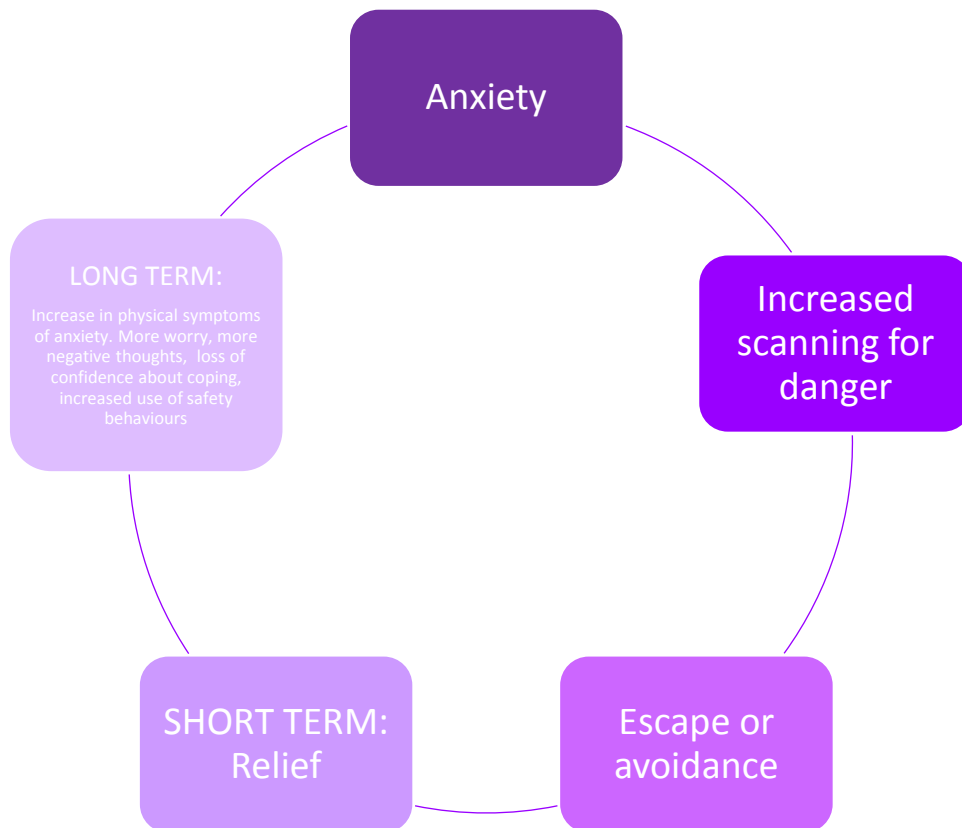
One off events, or ongoing stressful life events can cause a person to develop anxiety. Personality may also be factor here as what some see as stressful events, others will see as a normal part of life. Events that commonly cause anxiety include stress around work (or loss of job), finances, or school. Break down of relationships, or stress within a family or relationship can cause anxiety. Major emotional shock following a traumatic event or a natural disaster can trigger anxiety as can verbal, sexual or physical abuse. The experience of childhood sexual abuse can create a high vulnerability for depression and anxiety in adult life.

Substance Use

Long term use of substances such as alcohol, cannabis, amphetamines or sedatives (including prescriptive forms of these substances) can lead to anxiety. Anxiety can occur when the effects of the substance wear off, causing the body to enter a stressed state. Users of substances often feel driven to keep using the substance because the withdrawing anxiety is too difficult to cope with. Also, substance use can lead to psychosis where thoughts and emotions become so impaired that the individual loses touch with reality. In this state they may have distressing hallucinations or thoughts. Psychosis can occur following long term substance use, or as a one off episode.

The Cycle of Anxiety

If you are anxious about real life events that can cause harm, then this is normal. Being anxious about swimming in shark infested water, is likely to cause anxious symptoms. This is normal and not something you may wish to suppress. Anxiety is a concern when worrying gets out of control about potential threats. It's about trying to cope with a future event that you have already decided will be negative. Our natural response to this is to focus on the negatives related to the event and assess whether you think you can cope with it. If you decide you can't cope, you are more likely to become more anxious, and so on.



As your anxiety increases, you may try to prevent the unpleasant feelings by avoiding the situation altogether e.g. I don't like social gatherings so never attend work functions, avoid making a GP appointment etc.

If you cannot avoid the situation, then you may use subtle avoidance, such as; not saying anything at a group meeting, denying or not reporting symptoms to a doctor, standing by the door for a quick escape, using rituals such as hand washing or checking. You may also use safety behaviours, such as relying on medication, taking 'safety buddies,' or planning your exit before you have even begun. When you have to deal with the situation on another occasion, you may feel less confident, and so the cycle goes on.

Action Plan (1)

Anxiety can feel overwhelming. For those who have experienced it for some time, it may feel that it is part of 'who you are'. However, anxiety is very treatable – it just takes some effort, from you.

1. Do Something

This sounds obvious, but just knowing that you have a condition is unlikely to make any difference, you have to actually do something if you want to make a change in your life. If you think you are at risk of developing anxiety, or already have it – do something about it.

If you have experienced it for some time, anxiety is unlikely to go away on its own. Talk to your Doctor, Mental Health Practitioner or a PeopleSense EAP Psychologist about your experiences and let them offer you advice for treatment.

2. Learn to Relax

Relaxation is almost the opposite of anxiety but is a skill that can be learned like any other. If you have ongoing anxiety, relaxation may feel alien to you. It will take lots of practice before you accomplish it.

When we are anxious, our breathing is disrupted. Essentially, we take in more oxygen than the body needs – in other words we over breathe, or hyperventilate. When this imbalance is detected, the body responds with some chemical changes that produce symptoms such as dizziness, light-headedness, confusion, breathlessness, blurred vision, increase in heart rate to pump more blood around, numbness and tingling in the extremities, cold, clammy hands and muscle stiffness. The normal rate of breathing is 10-12 breaths per minute.

Use the calming technique by following these steps and you'll be on your way to developing a better breathing habit.

1. Ensure that you are sitting on a comfortable chair or laying on a bed
2. Take a breath in for 4 seconds (through the nose if possible)
3. Hold the breath for 2 seconds
4. Release the breath taking 6 seconds (through the nose if possible), then pause slightly before breathing in again.
5. Practise, regularly.

When you are doing your breathing exercises, make sure that you are using a stomach breathing style rather than a chest breathing style. You can check this by placing one hand on your stomach and one hand on your chest. The hand on your stomach should rise when you breathe in.

Try to practise at least once or twice a day at a time when you can relax, relatively free from distraction. This will help to develop a more relaxed breathing habit. The key to progress really is practise, so try to set aside some time each day. By using the calming technique, you can slow your breathing down and reduce your general level anxiety. With enough practice, it can even help to reduce your anxiety when you are in an anxious situation

Practice means progress. Only through practice can you become more aware of your muscles, how they respond with tension, and how you can relax them. Training your body to respond differently to stress is like any training – practising consistently is the key.

Action Plan (2)

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

One method of reducing muscle tension that people have found helpful is through a technique called Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR). In progressive muscle relaxation exercises, you tense up particular muscles and then relax them, and then you practise this technique consistently.



Preparing for relaxation

→ **Select your surroundings.** Minimise the distraction to your five senses. Such as turning off the TV and radio, and using soft lighting.

→ **Make yourself comfortable.** Use a chair that comfortably seats your body, including your head. Wear loose clothing, and take off your shoes.

→ **Internal mechanics.** Avoid practicing after big, heavy meals, and do not practice after consuming any intoxicants, such as alcohol.

General procedure

1. Once you've set aside the time and place for relaxation, slow down your breathing and give yourself permission to relax.
2. When you are ready to begin, tense the muscle group described. Make sure you can feel the tension, but not so much that you feel a great deal of pain. Keep the muscle tensed for approximately 5 seconds.
3. Relax the muscles and keep it relaxed for approximately 10 seconds. It may be helpful to say something like "Relax" as you relax the muscle.
4. When you have finished the relaxation procedure, remain seated for a few moments allowing yourself to become alert.

Relaxation sequence

1. Right hand and forearm. Make a fist with your right hand.
2. Right upper arm. Bring your right forearm up to your shoulder to "make a muscle".
3. Left hand and forearm.
4. Left upper arm.
5. Forehead. Raise your eyebrows as high as they will go, as though you were surprised by something.
6. Eyes and cheeks. Squeeze your eyes tight shut.
7. Mouth and jaw. Open your mouth as wide as you can, as you might when you're yawning.
8. Neck. !!! Be careful as you tense these muscles. Face forward and then pull your head back slowly, as though you are looking up to the ceiling.
9. Shoulders. Tense the muscles in your shoulders as you bring your shoulders up towards your ears.
10. Shoulder blades/Back. Push your shoulder blades back, trying to almost touch them together, so that your chest is pushed forward.
11. Chest and stomach. Breathe in deeply, filling up your lungs and chest with air.
12. Hips and buttocks. Squeeze your buttock muscles
13. Right upper leg. Tighten your right thigh.
14. Right, lower leg. !!! Do this slowly and carefully to avoid cramps. Pull your toes towards you to stretch the calf muscle.
15. Right foot. Curl your toes downwards.
16. Left upper leg. Repeat as for upper right leg.
17. Left lower leg. Repeat as for lower right leg.
18. Left foot. Repeat as for right foot.

3. Reverse the Cycle of Anxiety

As mentioned earlier, cycles of behaviour reinforce anxiety; especially avoidance of things that make us feel anxious. The way to deal with anxiety is to confront it and turn your negative cycles into positive ones. This means;



First learning to relax and monitor your breathing,

Then gradually exposing yourself to situations that cause you anxiety.... While practicing your relaxed breathing.

Check your thoughts- Throughout this process it's important to check your thinking and make sure your thoughts are helping you to succeed and are not working against you.'

For example, if you want to overcome your anxiety related to your relationship with your manager. You can set up as many meetings as you like, but if before you meet, your thoughts scream at you.....

"She hates me."

"I'm going to make a fool of myself."

"He thinks I'm useless at my job." "I can't deal with confrontation."

..... then you will never break the anxiety cycle!

Turn your thoughts around to.....

"I can cope."

"This is just a meeting – just two people talking to each other (i.e. not a confrontation)."

"She probably doesn't think about me at all, let alone think about me negatively."

"I'm pretty good at my job."

4. Get Treatment

Psychological and medical treatments for anxiety work.

You may need a thorough medical examination with a health professional to ensure there is not a physical basis for your anxiety. Where there is not an underlying medical condition, psychological treatments are as effective as medication.

Self-help books and the internet may be a starting point for some to educate yourself about the condition. However, unlike other mental health conditions, anxiety

is easy to reignite as the brain and body tries to keep you safe. This means that people may start a program at home from a book, but give up when they become stressed by the process. Treatment works best, where you have a treater who you trust and is supportive, but who is also prepared to challenge and motivate you when you resist the treatment plan. An experienced treater knows when they hear 'the anxiety talking' and can coach a person through it.





If the information provided on these pages resonates with you, it's time to do something about it. It's up to you to put in place a plan to start addressing and improving some of the symptoms you have identified. If you struggle with this, or anxiety is too high to contemplate doing it on your own, contact PeopleSense (08) 9388 9000 or 'contact us' page www.peoplesense.com.au to discuss how a psychologist may be able to assist you to do this.

PeopleSense only use Psychologists for their counselling services and are skilled at assisting people to recover and put their lives back in order. There is no problem too small or too large that we cannot help with.