

# Youth Mental Health Factsheet

## Anxiety

### What is Anxiety?

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**Anxiety is a normal reaction everyone experiences in their life, and how it is experienced will vary from person to person.**

The reaction can range from feeling mild (feeling uneasy) to severe (panic attack), and depending on the severity, these feelings can last anywhere from a few minutes to a few years.

There are many different signs and symptoms a person can experience with anxiety. These symptoms can affect thoughts, feelings, behaviours or present as physical reactions. Though anxiety is a normal experience to have, it becomes a problem when the symptoms are more severe, last longer and interfere with different areas of a person's life – including work, social or sporting activities, and relationships.

### Signs and symptoms of anxiety

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- **Thinking:**  
Racing mind or blank thoughts, difficulty concentrating, poor memory, confusion, strange dreams and a focus on what may go wrong.
- **Feeling:**  
Fear, worry, anger, impatience, nervous and irritability.
- **Behaviour:**  
Avoiding certain situations, becoming upset in social interactions, obsessive behaviour, unable to relax or sleep, increased use of drugs and alcohol to cope.
- **Physical:**  
Chest pain, rapid breathing and heart rate, dizzy, dry mouth, headaches, feeling, sweating, feeling numb, nausea and vomiting, muscle aches and tightness in shoulder/neck muscles and shaking.

### What causes anxiety?

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Usually there is a combination of factors:

- Genetics
- Parental Factors
- Thinking Style
- Negative experiences and life events.

### When anxiety becomes a problem

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Anxiety becomes a problem when it begins to interfere with everyday life and stops you from living how you want to.

Symptoms can become more severe and interfere with school, work and/or relationships. You may start planning ways to avoid situations (like meeting new people), certain negative thoughts take over and stop you finishing work, or you start doing certain actions repeatedly to try and reduce your feelings of anxiety (e.g. washing your hands excessively).

Anxiety Disorders affect 15% of young people within Australia aged 16-24, so if you have or think you have anxiety, you are not alone.<sup>1</sup>

### What types of anxiety are there?

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There are many types of anxiety:

- Social Phobia
- Generalised anxiety disorder
- Specific phobias
- Panic disorder
- Agoraphobia
- Separation anxiety
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

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<sup>1</sup> Teeson M, Slade T, Mills K. Comorbidity in Australia: findings of the 2007 National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing. Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry 2009; 43: 606-14.

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## What help is available?

The good news is, there is help available. This help can include medication, therapy, applying relaxation techniques, self help and online support. What type of anxiety someone has will determine the best type of treatment for them, so it is important to see a Doctor and they will help you figure out what is the right option for you. You do not have to ignore how you're feeling or try to deal with it by yourself.

## How can I help myself?

Talk to your parent or carer about your anxiety. Make an appointment with your Doctor or GP to talk about your anxiety and treatment options. They can set you up with a mental health plan to start your journey of managing your anxiety.

The following online resources will also give you great information and guidance:

- **Reach Out:**  
[www.au.reachout.com](http://www.au.reachout.com)  
(they also have an online forum where you can chat to others)
- **E-Couch:**  
[www.ecouch.edu.au](http://www.ecouch.edu.au)  
(an interactive online self-help program for social anxiety with more mental health topics coming soon)
- **Head to Health:**  
[www.headtohealth.gov.au](http://www.headtohealth.gov.au)
- **Mood Gym:**  
[www.moodgym.com.au](http://www.moodgym.com.au)  
(help with depression and anxiety. Workbooks, helpful guides)
- **Brave Program for teenagers:**  
[www.brave4you.psy.uq.edu.au/teen-program](http://www.brave4you.psy.uq.edu.au/teen-program) (info and skills to help teens cope with worry and anxiety)

## Apps available through Reach Out

- Worry Time
- Mood Mission
- Mood Path

## Scripture

There are many instances in scripture that recognise anxiety, they may help you remember that you are not alone and that your anxiety won't last forever.

**“When anxiety was great within me,  
your consolation brought me joy.”**

Psalm 94:19

**“Casting all your anxieties on him,  
because he cares for you.”**

1 Peter 5:7