

ANXIETY

Anxiety is a physiological response or symptomology that is generally associated and sustained by “basic fears” or a great deal of worry. Moreover, the intensity and frequency of the fear or worry are out of proportion to the likelihood of the feared events happening. Stressful situations, loss of control, or demands for performance can also elicit fear and worry that can trigger an anxiety response. In this seminar we will discuss anxiety in a broad context, as anxiety can also exhibit itself in the form of panic attacks, phobias, or obsessions.

What are the Symptoms of Anxiety?

- Fearful thoughts, extensive worry, or fearful situations
- A change in breathing patterns – hyperventilation (quick and shallow)
- Increased heart rate
- Muscle tension – neck, shoulders, and chest
- Sweating
- Fatigue
- Stomach tightness or need to release
- Tingling sensation in extremities – head, hands, feet
- Dizziness or light headedness
- Irritability
- Restlessness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Sleep difficulties

The physical responses described are in conjunction with a gradual decrease in oxygen from impaired

A Scale for Rating Degree of Anxiety:

0 *Relaxation* – Calm; a feeling of being undistracted and at peace

1 *Slight anxiety* – Passing twinge of anxiety; feeling slightly nervous

2 *Mild Anxiety* – Breathing changes; muscle tension; definitely nervous

3 *Moderate Anxiety* – Feeling uncomfortable, but still in control; heart rate increases; more rapid breathing; sweaty palms

4 *Marked Anxiety* – Feeling uncomfortable or “spacey”; muscles tighten in neck, shoulders, and chest; beginning to wonder about losing control

5 *Early Panic* -- Heart pounding or beating irregularly; constricted breathing; feeling spaciness or dizziness; definite fear of losing control; feel a need to escape

6 *Moderate Panic Attack* – All the previous feelings; feeling disoriented panic ensues over loss of control

7-10 *Major Panic Attack* – All previous symptoms; Terror; fear of going crazy or dying

Basic Anxiety Management Techniques:

1. Identify fearful thoughts or worries.
2. Begin to challenge these thought and “counterbalance” them.
3. Counterbalance these thought through journaling, reality checking, thought logs, or any method that brings these thought to awareness and balance.
4. May need to initially avoid situational settings that trigger the anxiety response.
5. Begin to train yourself in diaphragmatic breathing and deep muscle relaxation techniques.

** If you can maintain your oxygen level through proper breathing techniques at the early stages of an anxiety attack, you can stop the progression of anxiety symptomology and learn to regain control.