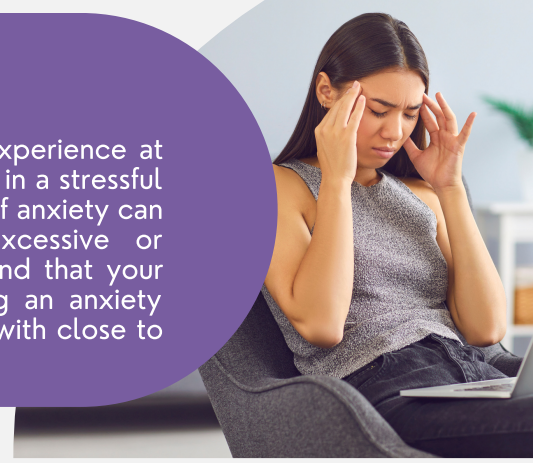# Anxiety

Anxiety is a sense of unease, worry or apprehension that most people will experience at some point in their life. Usually, these feelings pass when a person is no longer in a stressful situation or when the cause of their anxiety abates. In some situations, feelings of anxiety can be normal responses. When these feelings become overwhelming, excessive or protracted, however, it might be a sign of something more serious. If you find that your anxiety is disrupting or effecting your daily life, you could be experiencing an anxiety disorder. Anxiety conditions are the most prevalent mental health conditions, with close to 4% of the global population experiencing anxiety.

What causes anxiety?

Like other mental health conditions, anxiety can be triggered by a number of factors. Often, a combination of factors contribute to anxiety.

These include:

- chronic stress
- genetic predisposition
- experiences of trauma
- physical health issues
- major life changes
- drug and alcohol use

Anxiety conditions

Anxiety can affect people in different ways. Anxiety conditions, or anxiety disorders, share commonalities, including chronic and overwhelming fear or worry.

Generalised anxiety disorder (GAD). A person feels excessive, debilitating anxiety most days about a range of situations.

Panic disorder. When a person experiences a panic disorder, they feel sudden, intense fear which causes panic attacks. During a panic attack, a person may experience a range of physiological symptoms.

Social anxiety. Excessive and overwhelming worry surrounding public or social situations, including a fear of being judged, ridiculed or embarrassed.

Phobias. People experiencing a phobia feel an intense, irrational fear about a specific situation or object.

The signs and symptoms

Physical:

→ Panic attacks

→ Heart palpitations

→ A tight chest

→ Hot or cold flushes

→ Abdominal discomfort

Behavioural:

→ Procrastination

→ Avoidance of situations

→ Distress

→ Compulsive behaviour

→ Reduce performance

Thoughts/feelings:

→ Feeling 'on edge'

→ Racing thoughts

→ Inability to relax

→ Obsessive thinking

→ Feeling worried/afraid

STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING ANXIETY

1 **Psychological treatments.**
Psychological treatments can be highly effective in treating anxiety. CBT, or Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, is one common form of psychological therapy that can help those experiencing an anxiety condition.

2 **Physical/medical treatments.**
There are some forms of medication that may be prescribed to help manage anxiety conditions. Speak with a doctor about the options.

3 **Self-help strategies.**
Managing and treating anxiety may take a varied approach, and mind-body techniques, nutrition and certain exercises can be part of a complementary approach.

4 **Avoid alcohol and drug use.**
Excessive drug and alcohol usage can perpetuate and worsen symptoms of anxiety conditions.

5 **Social support.**
Having strong social support mechanism can help alleviate and lower symptoms of anxiety.