

Learn about the different types of anxiety

Panic is when you experience recurrent panic attacks which lead to distress and affect your life. Panic attacks which happen once or twice are found in almost 40 per cent of the population. Panic attacks are sudden periods of intense fear or extreme anxiety, which suddenly happen out of the blue or when there is no sign of danger. The effects of a panic attack vary from person to person, but may include sweating, feeling short of breath, pounding heart, dry mouth, thinking that you're dying, losing control or about to collapse (or similar). The attacks may last for a few minutes or up to half an hour. Some people develop the fear of going into situations in which they worry they could not escape or get rescued when these panics happen. They may avoid a range of things like leaving the house or going to the shops – this is Agoraphobia.

Post-Traumatic Stress involves bursts of anxiety anytime from one month after experiencing a seriously traumatic event (like an accident, sexual assault, violence or a natural disaster such a bushfire). You may be experiencing Post-Traumatic Stress if you have difficulty relaxing, have upsetting dreams or flashbacks of the event, or avoid activities that remind you of the event.

Obsessive Compulsive Anxiety involves unwanted thoughts and fears (obsessions) that cause anxiety and behaviours or rituals (compulsions) carried out to reduce the anxiety. For example, a fear of germs can lead to repeated washing of hands or clothes. You realise that these thoughts are irrational but the obsessions return all the time and the compulsions are hard to resist.

Generalised Anxiety involves uncontrollable and unrealistic worry about everyday situations such as school, work, relationships or health.

Phobias are disproportionately fearful feelings about a particular object or situation, like going near an animal, going to a social event, or receiving an injection. You may have a phobia if you avoid situations that involve the phobia (e.g. taking a different route to avoid a dog) and this causes you excessive distress or disables you.