

# Understanding & Coping with Anxiety Disorders

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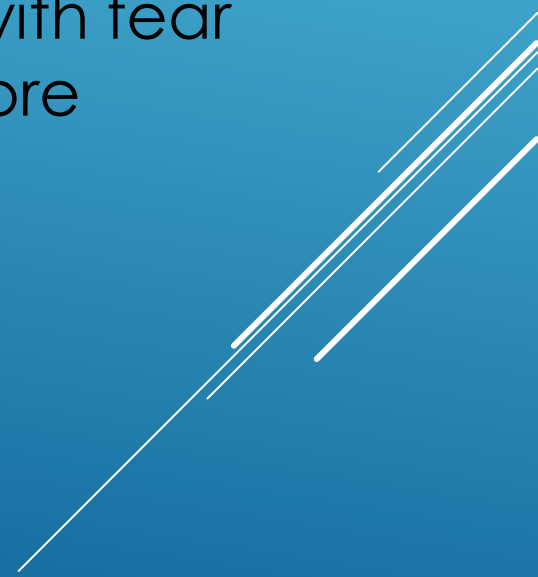


# Understanding Anxiety

Anxiety can be defined as "a state consisting of psychological and physical symptoms brought about by a sense of apprehension at a perceived threat".

Fear is similar to anxiety except that with fear the threat is, or is perceived to be, more concrete, present, or imminent.

Anxiety vs over-determined fear:



Anxiety in itself is instinctual and necessary as a survival mechanism to keep us alive.

The difference between any aspect of the human condition being healthy or unhealthy is seen in degree, absence of or presence of...

What is healthy in certain levels may be maladaptive in its excess or absence.



When treating an individual with anxiety issues, it should be done in the context of a thorough person-centered, trauma informed, culturally, linguistically competent evaluation.

Context should include:

Age

Race/ethnicity

Gender

Linguistic competence

Sexual orientation

Sexual identification/expression

History of trauma including but not limited to:

Physical/emotional/sexual abuse

Neglect

Loss

Domestic violence


Victim of or witness to violent crime

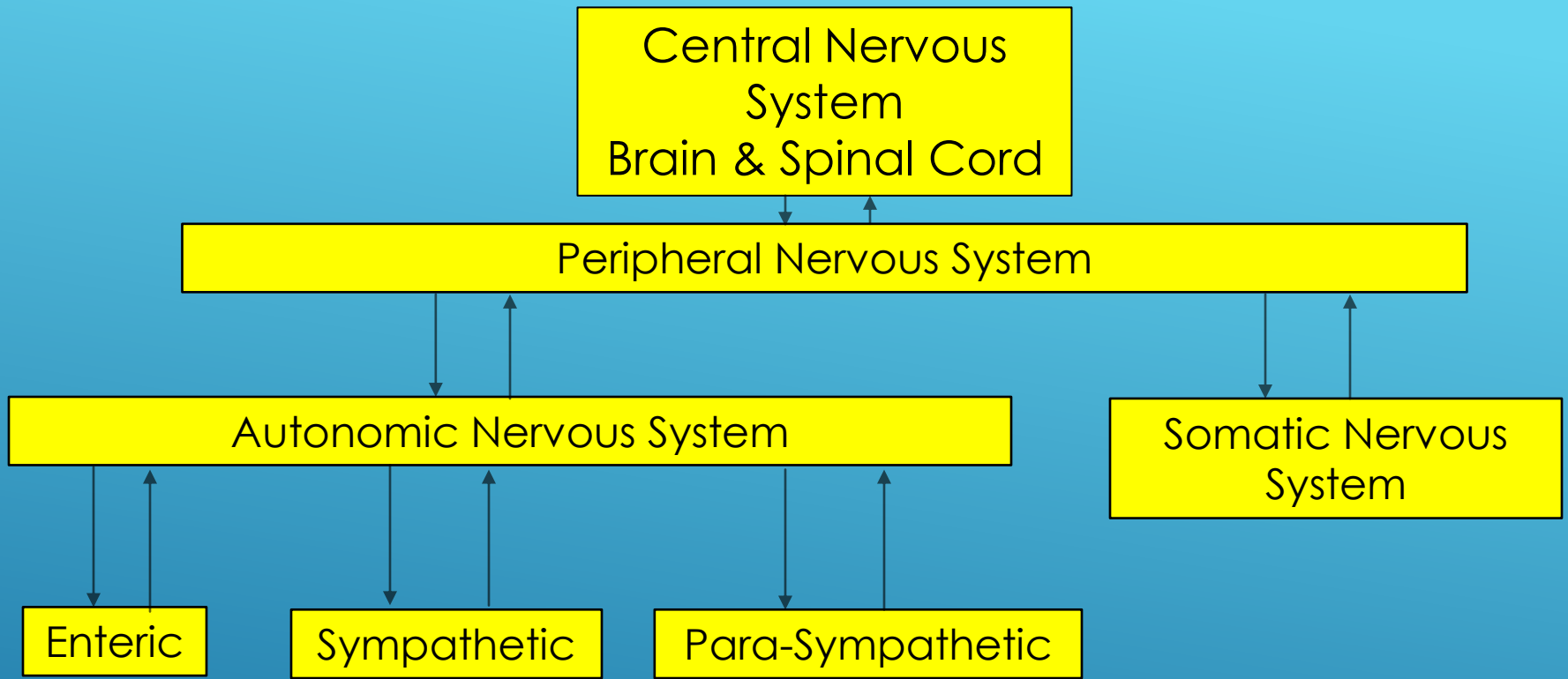
Loss due to sudden illness or death

In an anxiety disorder, exposure to the feared object or situation can trigger an intense attack of anxiety called a panic attack.

During a panic attack, symptoms of anxiety are so severe that the person fears that he or she is suffocating, having a heart attack, or losing control. Very soon, the person develops a fear of the panic attacks themselves, which in turn sets off further panic attacks.

A vicious cycle takes hold, with the panic attacks becoming ever more frequent and severe and even occurring "out of the blue".

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The Central Nervous System is made up of the brain and spinal cord

The Peripheral Nervous System includes all the nerves that go to & from the spinal cord and branches into two subsystems:

The somatic nervous system includes voluntary movements of muscles & joints.

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The autonomic nervous system includes involuntary movements of muscles & joints and has three branches:

The sympathetic system initiates arousal in the heart, lungs and other organs.

The parasympathetic system communicates via the Vagus nerve to calm activity in the cardiovascular, respiratory and other systems.

The enteric system refers to the digestive processes.

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The digestive system is reactive to the action in the sympathetic and parasympathetic systems.

The skin and glands also react to autonomic systems activity.

These systems communicate in feedback loops: when neurotransmitters initiate activity in the brain or body, the action generates a message that is complete.

When activity starts, it has to stop again. Every cell has to rest and recharge so it can do it again later.

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The emotional work of the brain is done in the Limbic System. It consists of four parts:

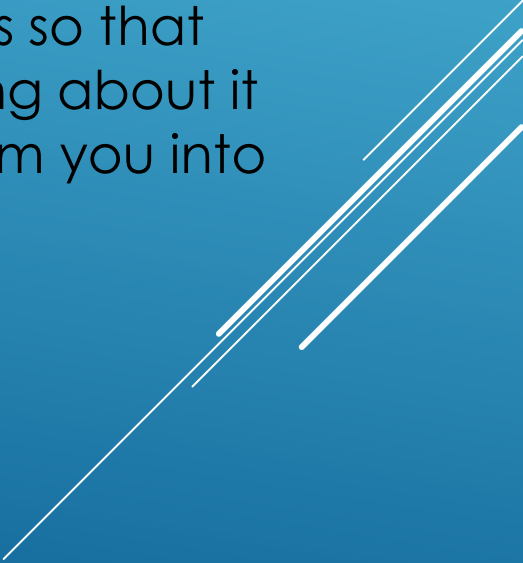
Thalamus

Hypothalamus

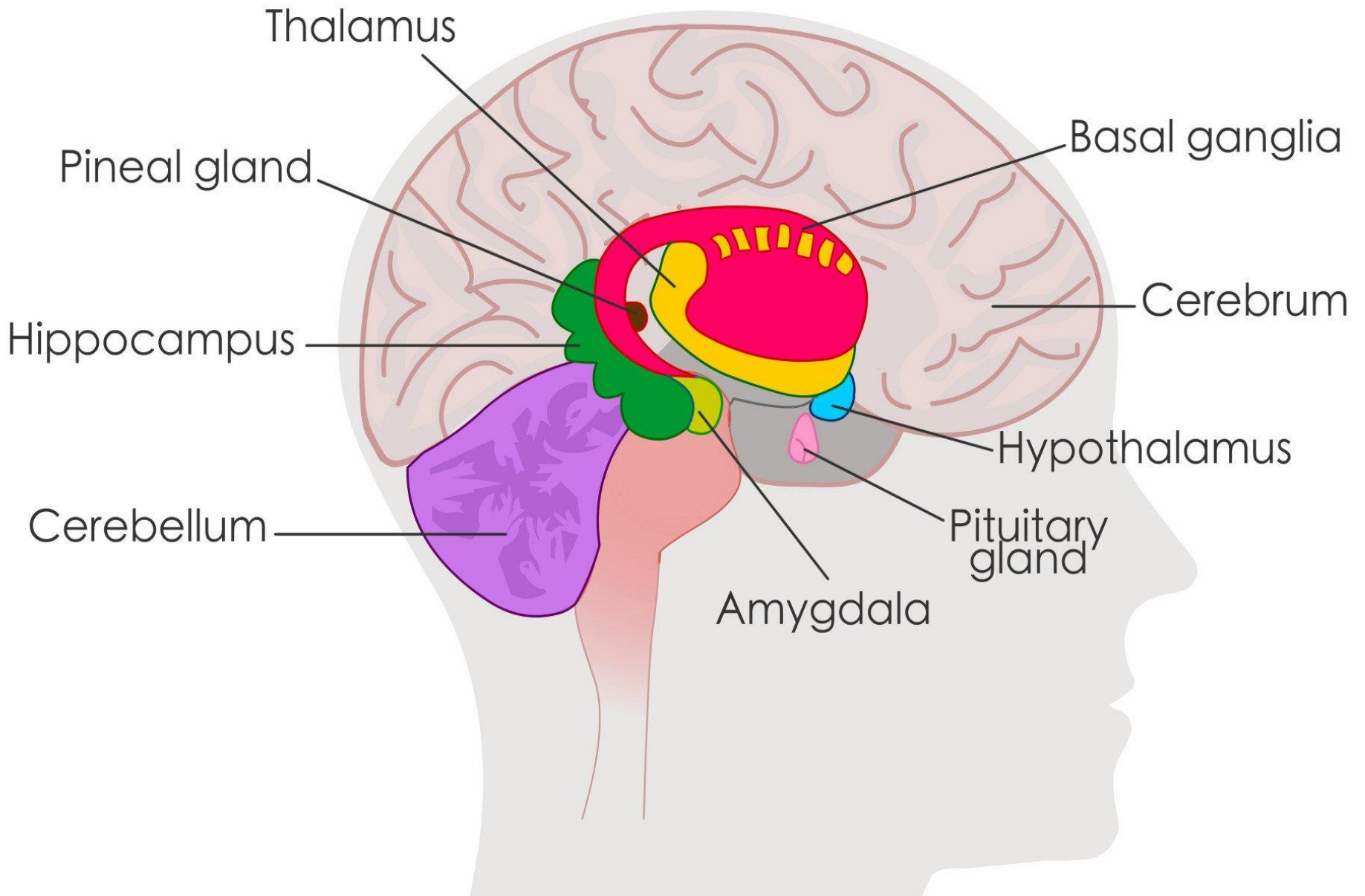
Hippocampus

Amygdala

Each part plays a specific role in the creation of emotional responses and each part is connected to other parts of the brain and nervous systems so that some of its work can be done without thinking about it (like stopping a child from running away from you into traffic).

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# Limbic System



Thalamus: Think of it as the relay, taking information from the outer world via sensory input and relaying it to the other parts of the system and send it to the cortex.

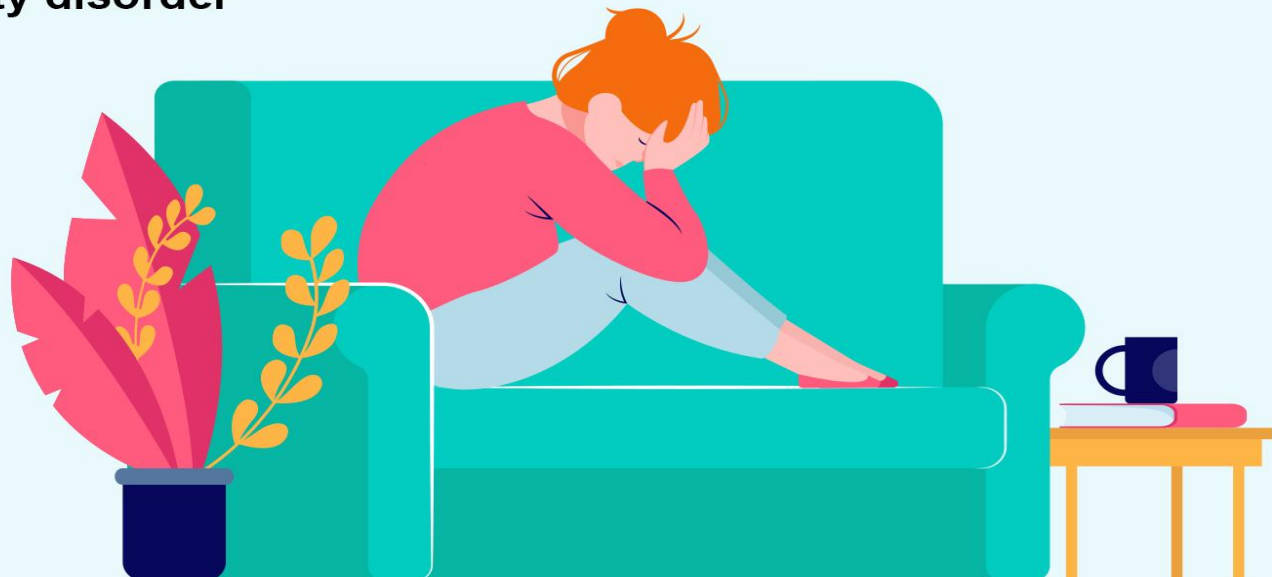
Hypothalamus: Is both a monitor and an initiator. It constantly scans the inner environment for hormone levels, hunger & thirst, oxygen levels and other important data and initiates adjustments to those levels.

Hippocampus: Is the part of the limbic system registers details. It recognizes incoming information without emotion. It is the Sgt. Joe Friday, "Just the facts ma'am".

Amygdala: is a key player in developing anxiety. It can be like the Little Red Hen. Whenever something negative shakes it up it cries out: "The sky is falling!"

# Types of Anxiety:

- ▶ **Post-Traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)**
- ▶ **Panic attacks**
- ▶ **Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)**
- ▶ **Social phobia**
- ▶ **Generalized anxiety disorder**

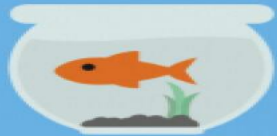




# How To Recognise the Signs of Anxiety



Needing Reassurance



Memory Issues



Overthinking



Avoidance



Insomnia



Sweating



Rapid Heartbeat



Stomach Issues



Headaches



Trouble Breathing



Procrastination



Panic Attacks



Constant Worrying



Trouble Concentrating



Lack of Patience



# Social Anxiety Symptoms

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## Emotional

- Worry and intense fear about social interactions
- Constant replay of social interactions after they happen
- Anxiety about future events
- Fear of embarrassing self



## Physical

- Upset stomach
- Sweating
- Dizziness
- Blushing
- Muscle tension
- Shaky voice

## Avoidance

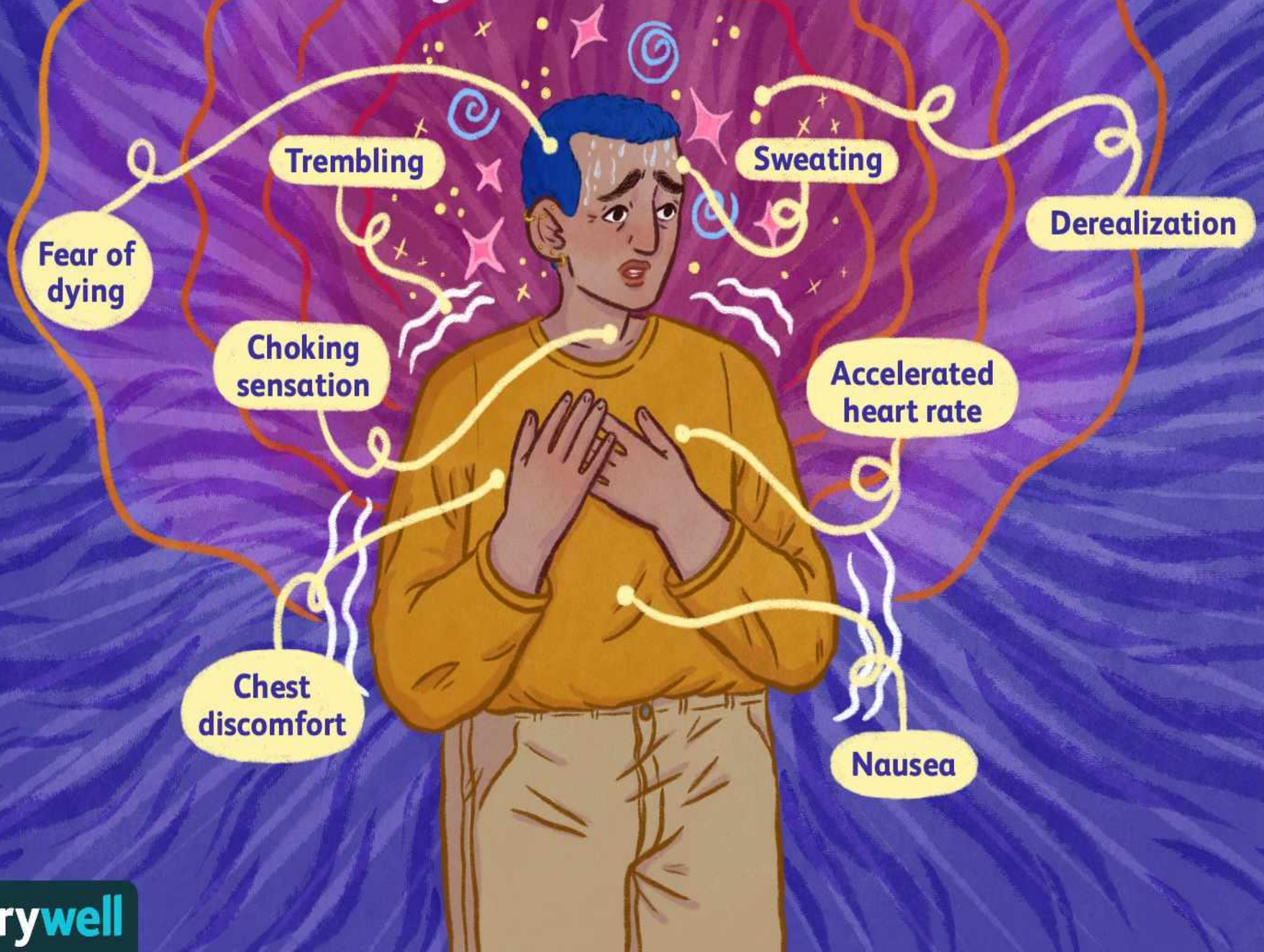
- Avoiding social interactions or events
- Avoiding activities that involve interacting with others
- Cancelling outings

A red silhouette of a person with their hands raised to their head, symbolizing panic. The word "Panic" is written in white, bold, sans-serif font across the chest area of the silhouette.

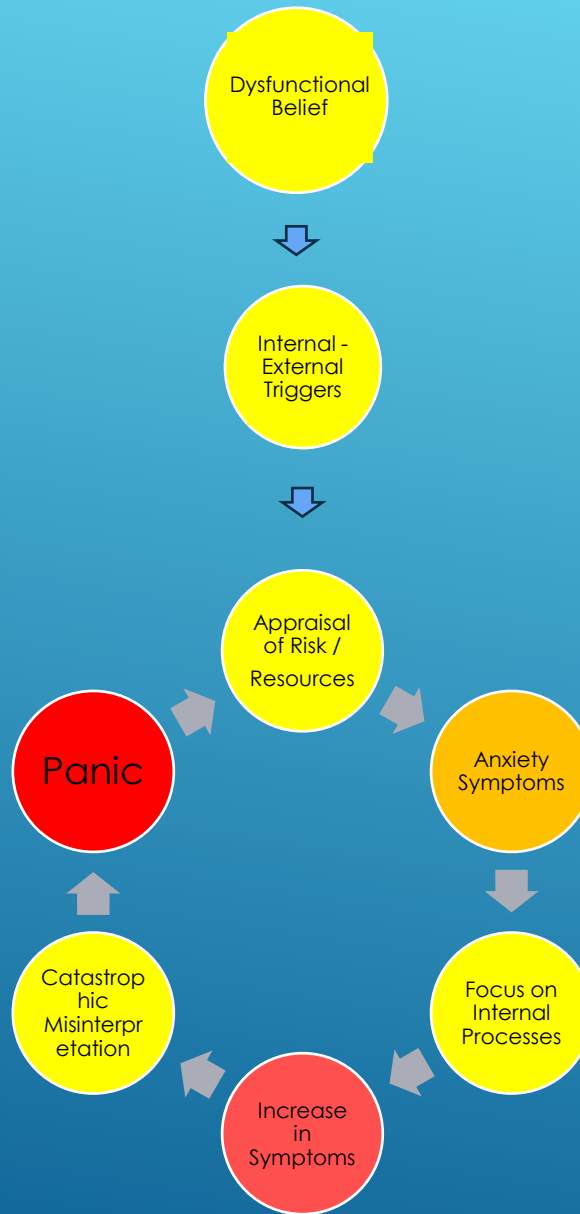
**Panic**



# Potential Signs You Have a Panic Disorder




# The Panic Cycle




# Common causes

Anxiety is not always related to an underlying condition. It may be caused by:


- Stress that can result from work, school, personal relationship
  - Emotional trauma
  - Financial concerns
  - Stress caused by a chronic or serious medical condition
  - A major event or performance
  - Side effect of certain medications
  - Alcohol consumption, drugs such as cocaine
  - Lack of oxygen
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Some of the most common causes of anxiety include:


- Low serotonin levels
  - A shy or nervous temperament as a child
  - A family history of anxiety or other mental illnesses
  - Past or present stressful and negative life or environmental events.
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## Signs you're experiencing anxiety

You may experience anxiety in an emotional, mental, and/or physical way. The emotional or mental feelings may include:

- Nervousness
  - Excessive worry
  - Feelings of danger, panic, or dread
  - Trouble concentrating
  - Irritation
  - Difficulty controlling feelings of worry
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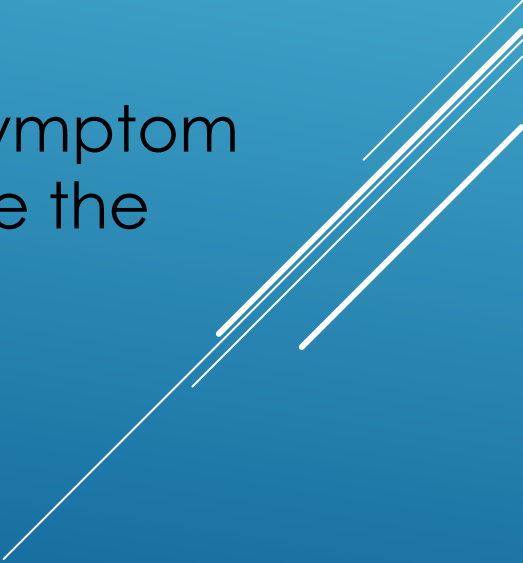
Some physical feelings that can accompany anxiety involve restlessness, increased heart rate, and muscle tension. Additional symptoms and medical concerns linked to anxiety may include:

- Rapid breathing
  - Sleep problems, such as difficulty falling or staying asleep, or unsatisfying sleep
  - Fatigue
  - Thyroid troubles
  - Heart disease
  - Diabetes
  - Certain respiratory disorders
  - Drug misuse or withdrawal
  - Chronic pain
  - Irritable bowel syndrome
- 

Anxiety symptoms manifest themselves as cognitive and/or somatic symptoms.

When assessing each, get a detailed description of how the distressing thoughts manifest themselves and/or how the somatic symptoms express themselves.

In each episode, determine which symptom was experienced first. That should be the first target of intervention.

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## Managing anxiety


The first step in managing anxiety is to learn as much as one can about it, as a thorough understanding of anxiety can, in itself, reduce its frequency and intensity.





When anxiety comes, accept it. Do not try to escape from it, but simply wait for it to pass. Easier said than done, of course, but it is important that you should try.

Try to adopt a positive outlook: although the symptoms of anxiety can be terrifying, they cannot really harm you.



## Tips for coping

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to coping with anxiety. There are, however, several measures that have proved useful to others and may be worth trying:

**Keep stress in check** by going on regular walks or taking an exercise class. Consistent physical activity can do wonders for anxiety and depression.

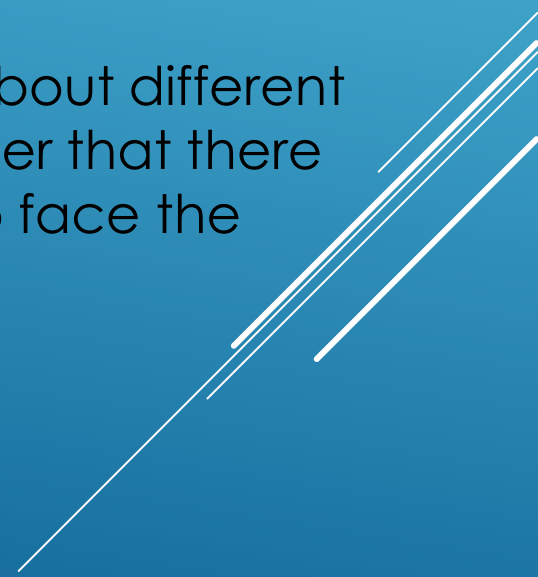
**Eat a balanced diet** with plenty of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Keep your mental energy stable by avoiding greasy, sugary, high-fat, and processed foods.

**Write down** your stress and anxiety triggers. Keeping a journal can help you identify obstacles to address on your own or with a therapist.

**Challenge** your negative thoughts and worries. Look for opportunities to contradict, fact-check, and replace distressing thoughts with more balanced or neutral ones.

**Get enough sleep.** Try to fit in at least seven hours of sleep per night. If you are having trouble sleeping, see if you can create a consistent sleep schedule, make sure your bedroom is quiet, remove all electronics from the area, and avoid large meals before bedtime.

**Find support** by talking to a friend or reading about different ways to find balance in your life. Also, remember that there are resources available and you don't have to face the anxiety alone.


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## Treatments and Therapies

- Psychotherapy. Psychotherapy or “talk therapy” can help people with anxiety disorders. To be effective, psychotherapy must be directed at the person’s specific anxieties and tailored to his or her needs.
- Medication. Medication does not cure anxiety disorders but can help relieve symptoms. Medication for anxiety is prescribed by doctors, such as a psychiatrist or primary care provider.
- Support Groups. Some people with anxiety disorders might benefit from joining a self-help or support group and sharing their problems and achievements with others.
- Stress Management Techniques. Stress management techniques and meditation can help people with anxiety disorders calm themselves and may enhance the effects of therapy.

What is the most effective treatment for anxiety?

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) for anxiety. Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is the most widely-used therapy for anxiety disorders. Research has shown it to be effective in the treatment of panic disorder, phobias, social anxiety disorder, and generalized anxiety disorder, among many other conditions.



What is the most effective treatment for anxiety:

Using CBT to activate the functions of the brain to change thoughts & behaviors and connect to the sensory stimuli and prevent overload.

This includes learning to read somatic systems input and employing progressive relaxation techniques to ground the self and regain a sense of homeostasis.

It also includes identifying those distressing, dysfunctional thoughts and employing cognitive interventions to replace distortions of thought: EX: use technique of the funhouse mirror to identify distortions

WHAT IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE TREATMENT FOR ANXIETY  
(CONTINUED):

IDENTIFY:

FACT – (PERCEPTION) – FEELING

DEVELOP A TOOL KIT FOR USE WHEN (NOT IF) A POTENTIAL  
PANIC ATTACK OCCURS. TOOL KIT EMPLOYS BOTH COGNITIVE  
AND SOMATIC INTERVENTIONS.

AVOID THE AVOID: “I GOT THIS”


EFFICACY VS EFFECTANCE: INDIANA JONES

DISTRESS TOLERANCE, SKILL DEVELOPMENT & THE MONSTER  
UNDER THE BED.

THREE – WAY DISSOCIATION (DESENSITIZATION) TECHNIQUE

When should you consider medication for anxiety?


If you have **severe anxiety that's interfering with your ability to function**, medication may be helpful—especially as a short-term treatment. However, many people use anti-anxiety medication when therapy, exercise, or other self-help strategies would work just as well or better, minus the drawbacks.





What medications are used to treat anxiety disorder?

There are multiple medications used to treat anxiety disorder. These include prescription medications such as **benzodiazepines, selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRI), serotonin norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRI), anti-anxiety antihistamines and beta blockers.**





Help is always available:

Crisis Services: (716) 834-3131

National Suicide Prevention Hotline:

988

Information & Referral: 211

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