Anxiety is the body’s natural response to stress in the form of fear and apprehension to future events. Anxiety can be caused in a variety of situations due to fear of conditions such as a job interview, giving a speech or the first day of school. This form of anxiety is normal and can be helpful as it can allow individuals to be alert and focused on a task and often it can help us perform to our best and achieve goals quicker. Continual symptoms of anxiety lasting longer than 6 months interfering with daily life, however, may indicate an anxiety disorder.

**Types of Anxiety Disorders**

- **Generalised anxiety disorder (GAD)**: individual feels anxious and worried most of the time, interfering with their normal lives.
- **Panic disorder**: individual experiences frequent panic attacks at unexpected times.
- **Social anxiety disorder**: extreme fear of judgement in social situations.
- **Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)**: reoccurring irrational thoughts leading to compulsion to perform certain behaviours and rituals.
- **Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)**: anxiety as a result of a recent event.
- **Separation anxiety**: fear of being separated from home or loved ones.
- **Phobia**: excessive, irrational fear of an object, situation or activity.

**Symptoms of Anxiety from the Four Levels of Behaviour:**

**Biological**

Individuals with anxiety have a fight or flight response that is significantly more active. Research has also suggested that there are genetic links to vulnerability to anxiety disorders and anxiety can also be genetic within families.

**Other symptoms include**
- Headaches
- Insomnia
- Trembling
- Muscle tension
- Nausea

**Basic processes**

Research suggests that anxious responses within individuals can be formed by classical conditioning. People with anxiety often have interpretation bias where they perceive negative information towards themselves based on interaction with others. Memory can also be impaired in anxiety sufferers due to constant worry regarding other aspects and inattention towards tasks.

**Other symptoms include**
- Magnified threats and failures
- Fear, worrisome thoughts
- Hypersensitivity to criticism
- Avoidance

**Person**

Anxiety can arise as a reflection of an individual’s past experiences, personality, attitudes and beliefs as well as stress management skills. It has also been discovered that women are more likely to be diagnosed with anxiety disorders as they are more likely to seek help.

**Other symptoms include**
- Inability to cope
- High stress levels
- Neuroticism

**Sociocultural**

Traumatic experiences based on social, economic, political, religious or cultural affiliation can cause an individual to develop an anxiety disorder.

**Other symptoms include**
- Lack of family support
- Avoidance of groups, work colleagues, social contact and crowds
- Social phobias
- Environmental stressors
- Decreased job security
RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS FROM THE FOUR LEVELS OF BEHAVIOUR:

### Biological
- Risk:
  - Prematurity
  - Disability
  - Prenatal brain injury
  - Illness and physical impairment
  - Low birth weight and birth injury
- Protective:
  - Good physical health

### Basic processes
- Risk:
  - Low intelligence
  - Low self-esteem
  - Poor problem solving
  - Beliefs about aggression
  - School failure
- Protective:
  - Social competence
  - Above average intelligence
  - Moral beliefs
  - Positive self-related cognitions
  - School achievement

### Person
- Risk:
  - Difficult temperament
  - Insecure attachment
  - Impulsivity
  - Lack of empathy
  - Hyperactivity
- Protective:
  - Attachment to family
  - Optimism
  - Good coping style
  - Internal focus of control
  - Empathy

### Sociocultural
- Risk:
  - Alienation from other people
  - Criminality
  - Lack of warmth or affection
  - Death of a family member
  - Unemployment and homelessness
- Protective:
  - Supportive caring parents
  - Secure and stable family
  - Economic security
  - Access to support services
  - Positive school environment

### Treatments from the Four Levels of Behaviour:

#### Biological: Medication
The most common type of medication is known as benzodiazepines. Anxiety medication can promote relaxation and reduce muscle tension of individuals. Anxiety medication however can only be used for a short period of time as they can be addictive. They should be used alongside other treatments, not as the only treatment for anxiety.

#### Basic Processes: Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)
Cognitive behavioural therapy is a structured treatment for anxiety, recognizing the way individuals think, act and feel. CBT involves a therapist helping the individual to identify patterns in thoughts and behaviours causing the individual to feel anxious. CBT helps clients to change their thoughts, creating coping styles. CBT is effective as it is applicable to all age groups, however, being diagnosed can be confronting.

#### Person: Assertiveness Training
A lack of confidence in workplace, home or social situations can cause anxiety. Assertiveness training aims to help clients become more assertive to reduce anxious thoughts and feelings without becoming aggressive. Assertiveness training involves role playing exercises using ‘I’ statements. Assertiveness training is a very ethical treatment as there are minimal risks involved but however it is not relevant if mental illness is not related to the workplace.

#### Sociocultural: Support groups
Belonging to a recognised support group has initiated positive results in reducing symptoms of anxiety. Support groups promote feelings of belonging and not being alone by hearing and talking with other individuals with similar illnesses and symptoms. Support groups can be in the form of face-to-face or via an online chat room.

### Support Services:
If these symptoms sound like they could relate to you or someone you know, please visit the following organisations for help or support. It is important that individuals never self-diagnose as a diagnosis can only be made by a qualified health professional.

- **Beyond Blue**
  - Phone number: 1300 22 4636 (24 hours / 7 days per week)
  - Website: [https://www.beyondblue.org.au](https://www.beyondblue.org.au)
  - Email: Receive response within 24 hours
  - Chat online: 3pm - 12am / 7 days per week
  - Online forums: (24 hours / 7 days a week)

- **Headspace**
  - Phone number: 1800 650 890
  - Website: [https://www.headspace.org.au](https://www.headspace.org.au)
eheadspace: (9am - 1am / 7 days per week)

- **Lifeline**
  - Phone number: 13 11 14 (24 hour crisis hotline)
  - Website: [https://www.lifeline.org.au](https://www.lifeline.org.au)
  - Crisis support chat: (7pm - midnight 7 days a week)