

# What is Anxiety?

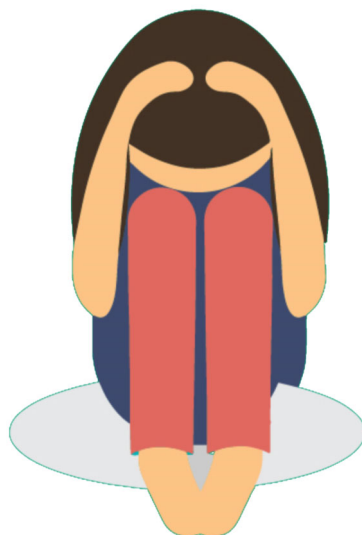
Anxiety is a word we use to describe feelings of unease, worry and fear. It incorporates both the emotions and the physical sensations we might experience when we are worried or nervous about something. Although we usually find it unpleasant, anxiety is related to the 'fight or flight' response – our normal biological reaction to feeling threatened

## Symptoms:

If you experience anxiety, you might find that you identify with some of the physical and psychological sensations below. Anxiety can feel different for different people, so you might also experience other kinds of feelings, which aren't listed here.

### *Physical sensations:*

- nausea (feeling sick)
- tense muscles and headaches
- pins and needles
- feeling light headed or dizzy
- faster breathing
- sweating or hot flushes
- a fast, thumping or irregular heart beat
- raised blood pressure
- difficulty sleeping
- needing the toilet more frequently, or less frequently
- churning in the pit of your stomach
- you might experience a panic attack



### *Psychological sensations:*

- feeling tense, nervous and on edge
- having a sense of dread, or fearing the worst
- feeling like the world is speeding up or slowing down
- feeling like other people can see you're anxious and are looking at you
- feeling your mind is really busy with thoughts
- dwelling on negative experiences, or thinking over a situation again and again (this is called rumination)
- feeling restless and not being able to concentrate
- feeling numb



# What is Depression?

Depression is a low mood that lasts for a long time, and affects your everyday life. In its mildest form, depression can mean just being in low spirits. It doesn't stop you leading your normal life but makes everything harder to do and seem less worthwhile.

At its most severe, depression can be life-threatening because it can make you feel suicidal or simply give up the will to live.

## Symptoms:

Common signs and symptoms of depression Some common signs of depression include:

### *How you might feel:*

- down, upset or tearful
- restless, agitated or irritable
- guilty, worthless and down on yourself
- empty and numb
- isolated and unable to relate to other people
- finding no pleasure in life or things you usually enjoy
- a sense of unreality
- no self-confidence or self-esteem
- hopeless and despairing
- suicidal

### *How you might behave:*

- avoiding social events and activities you usually enjoy
- self-harming or suicidal behaviour
- finding it difficult to speak or think clearly
- losing interest in sex
- difficulty in remembering or concentrating on things
- using more tobacco, alcohol or other drugs than usual
- difficulty sleeping, or sleeping too much
- feeling tired all the time
- no appetite and losing weight, or eating too much and gaining weight
- physical aches and pains with no obvious physical cause
- moving very slowly, or being restless and agitated



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# What is an eating problem?

An eating problem is any relationship with food that you find difficult. Food plays an important part in our lives and most of us will spend time thinking about what we eat.

Sometimes we may try to eat more healthily, have cravings, eat more than usual or lose our appetite. Changing your eating habits every now and again is normal. But if food and eating feels like it's taking over your life then it may become a problem. Lots of people think that if you have an eating problem you will be over or underweight, and that being a certain weight is always associated with a specific eating problem. This is a myth. Anyone, regardless of age, gender or weight, can be affected by eating problems.

## Symptoms:

- restrict the amount of food you eat
- eat more than you need or feel out of control when you eat
- eat a lot in secret
- feel very anxious about eating or digesting food
- eat lots of food in response to difficult emotions (when you don't feel physically hungry)
- only eat certain types of food or stick to a rigid set of diet rules and feel very anxious and upset if you have to eat something different
- do things to get rid of what you eat (purging)
- stick to rigid rules around what you can and can't eat and how food should look – and feel very upset if you break those rules
- feel strongly repulsed at the idea of eating certain foods
- eat things that are not really food
- be scared of certain types of food or eating in public
- think about food and eating a lot or all the time
- compare your body to other people's and think about their shape or size a lot
- check, test and weigh your body a lot – and base your self-worth on how much you weigh or whether you pass your checks and tests.



# What is Self Harm?

Self-harm is when you hurt yourself as a way of dealing with very difficult feelings, painful memories or overwhelming situations and experiences that feel out of control. It can be the thing people turn to when they feel they have no other option.

**Some people have described self harm as a way to:**



- express something that is hard to put into words
- turn invisible thoughts or feelings into something visible
- change emotional pain into physical pain
- reduce overwhelming emotional feelings or thoughts
- have a sense of being in control
- escape traumatic memories
- have something in life that they can rely on
- punish yourself for your feelings and experiences
- stop feeling numb, disconnected or dissociated
- create a reason to physically care for themselves
- express suicidal feelings and thoughts without taking their own life.

## Why do people harm themselves?

There are no fixed rules about why people self-harm. It really can be very different for everyone. For some people, self-harm is linked to specific experiences and is a way of dealing with something that's either happening at the moment or which happened in the past. For others, the reasons are less clear and can be harder to make sense of. Sometimes you might not know why you hurt yourself. If you don't understand the reasons for your self-harm, you are not alone and you can still ask for help.

**Any difficult experience can cause someone to self-harm. Common reasons include:**

- pressures at school or work
- bullying
- money worries
- sexual, physical or emotional abuse
- bereavement
- confusion about your sexuality
- breakdown of a relationship
- loss of a job
- an illness or health problem
- low self-esteem
- an increase in stress
- difficult feelings, such as depression, anxiety, anger or numbness.

**Self-harm can take many forms...**



Self-harm can be a response to any situation or pressure with the potential to impact on someone.

# Suicidal feelings

Suicide is the act of intentionally taking your own life. Suicidal feelings can range from being preoccupied by abstract thoughts about ending your life, or feeling that people would be better off without you, to thinking about methods of suicide, or making clear plans to take your own life. If you are feeling suicidal, you might be scared or confused by these feelings. But you are not alone. Many people think about suicide at some point in their lifetime.

## What does it feel like to be suicidal?

Everyone's experience of suicidal feelings is unique to them. You might feel unable to cope with the enduring difficult feelings you are experiencing. You may feel less like you want to die and more like you cannot go on living the life you have. These feelings may build over time or might fluctuate from moment to moment. And it's common to not understand why you feel this way. Here are some thoughts, feelings and experiences you may go through if you are feeling suicidal.

### *How you might think/feel:*

- hopeless, like there is no point in living
- tearful and overwhelmed by negative thoughts
- unbearable pain that you can't imagine ending
- useless, unwanted or unneeded by others
- desperate, as if you have no other choice
- like everyone would be better off without you
- cut off from your body or physically numb

### *What you may experience:*

- poor sleep with early waking
- change in appetite, weight gain or loss
- no desire to take care of yourself, for example neglecting your physical appearance
- wanting to avoid others
- self-loathing and low self-esteem
- urges to self-harm

