

# Anxiety

N O R T H D U R H A M P R O F E S S I O N A L C O U N S E L L O R S

## ANXIETY IN ADULTS

If you suspect that you or your loved one has anxiety, the first step is to see your family physician to clarify a diagnosis, and to rule out any medical conditions such as thyroid irregularities that might mimic an anxiety disorder. Speak to your physician about the various treatment options.

Treatment for an anxiety disorder can include medication and psychotherapy, sometimes in combination. Cognitive Behavior Therapy has been shown to be very effective in treating anxiety in both adults and children.

Our lives today are becoming increasingly more complex with multiple demands which likely impact our anxiety and stress. While some amount of anxiety is normal and necessary to our survival through human evolution, it sometimes becomes excessive and overwhelming and interferes with your ability to cope with everyday life.

Anxiety is more than feeling nervous about an upcoming event such as writing an exam or an activity you have not ever done before. An anxiety disorder is characterized by persistent and overwhelming fear or worry that interferes with daily living. While there are several types

of anxiety disorders such as Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, Generalized Anxiety Disorder, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, or social/health anxiety, they tend to share the common characteristics of extreme fear or worry, anxious physical arousal, and some forms of irrational thoughts and avoidance.

It is not uncommon for some individuals to have difficulty recognizing that they suffer from anxiety until what may appear as “out of the blue,” they experience terrifying symptoms of dizziness, racing heart, chest pain, difficulty breathing or a choking sensation, and a strong belief that something will go terribly

wrong. Some people’s first contact with a mental health professional is after they have gone to the hospital’s emergency room with a frightening episode of a panic attack. After some investigation into possible medical causes, they are often advised that they have experienced a panic attack.

Some evidence suggests that there may be a hereditary basis for anxiety, which combined with life stressors and personality traits, may predispose some individuals to developing an anxiety disorder. Research suggests one in four adults has experienced an anxiety disorder at some point in their life.

## ANXIETY IN CHILDREN

Children experience various states of fear and anxiety from the time of birth. It is sometimes easy to tell if a child is anxious by their crying and clinging behaviours, whereas at other times, it is difficult to identify anxiety in children. Some children may hide

their anxiety as it is too difficult to express, while some children turn their anxiety into angry tantrums or defiant behaviours. Most young children experience fears of the dark, monsters, separation from parents, animals, and strangers. As children grow, these fears

gradually change to fears about social acceptance, academic and sports achievements, health, mortality, and family transitions. Difficult or traumatic events that can occur to a child may also increase the likelihood of anxiety developing.