

## The American Counseling Association's "Counseling Corner" Weekly Columns

### What To Do If Anxiety Is Taking Over Your Life

from the American Counseling Association

It's perfectly normal to feel anxious or nervous at various times. It could be a new work situation, a big test at school, or an important decision to be made. Such events, for any of us, normally bring some degree of stress and anxiety.

In fact, it's usually a healthy response. That anxiety will make us focus more on what we're about to face and think harder about the outcomes in front of us.

But when anxiety becomes an ongoing situation that is affecting a person's ability to lead a productive and satisfying life, that's much more serious and may indicate an anxiety disorder. Someone suffering from an anxiety disorder faces constant worry and fear. These emotions can be so overwhelming that they interfere with everything else in the person's life.

Anxiety disorders can strike in a variety of forms. A panic disorder will bring a person feelings of terror that can come on very quickly and with no warning. In some cases a panic disorder will trigger physical reactions, such as sweating, chest pain, and irregular heartbeats, making the person feel like he's having a heart attack.

People suffering from a social anxiety disorder may find themselves constantly overcome with worry and feelings of self-consciousness about common, everyday social situations.

While no one knows exactly what causes these or other types of anxiety disorders, the symptoms are easy to recognize. If someone's life is being disrupted because he or she is constantly fearful or panicky, has shortness of breath, feels dizzy, has trouble sleeping and finds it difficult to be still and calm, chances are high that some form of anxiety disorder is the issue.

While suffering from an anxiety disorder, of whatever type, clearly can derail what should be a happy and productive life, the good news is that an anxiety disorder can most likely be successfully diagnosed and treated once it is recognized and action is taken.

Anxiety is not a problem to be ignored. Not only does it severely interfere with a normal, happy life, but the stress it brings can lead to serious health issues.

If you or someone close to you seems to be constantly anxious and worried to the point that they are unable to cope with everyday life, a visit to your family doctor, or to a professional counselor specializing in this field, is an action that should not be put off.

*Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to [ACACorner@counseling.org](mailto:ACACorner@counseling.org) or visit the ACA website at [www.counseling.org](http://www.counseling.org).*

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