

# ANXIETY EXPLAINED

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## Anxiety Symptoms

Phobias, Panic Attacks, Mood Disturbance, SAD symptoms, and even some physical symptoms have the potential to be anxiety symptoms.

**The symptom is an *outward* expression of that *inner* anxiety.**

We can argue that it is a *symbolic* representation of the anxiety within a person

## Current Stresses

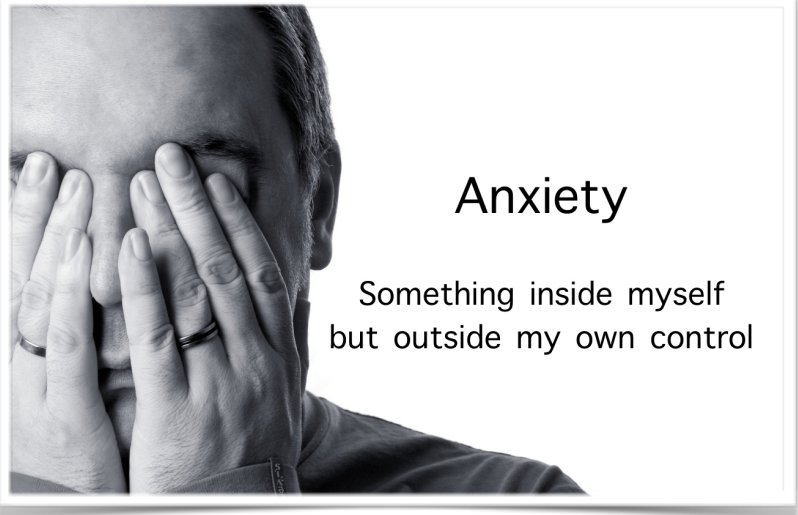
The greater the level of stress an individual is experiencing *right now*, the greater their anxiety symptoms will be.

When life is kind to us, we are unlikely to be suffering greatly with our anxiety symptoms. *They will still be there...*but their intensity will be reduced.

When life becomes less kind, the intensity of our anxiety symptoms will also intensify.

## Internal/External Stress

Think of stress as *external* pressures and anxiety being *internal*, and they both have an impact on each other.



## The Anxiety Attack

**The heart beats alarmingly quickly, like palpitations, and you become aware that you are breathing more quickly; it's as if you couldn't get enough air. There can be a cramped feeling across the lower part of the diaphragm and a tingling sensation, sometimes accompanied by hot and cold flushes to unexpected parts of the body. You can feel almost rooted to the spot with an overwhelming feeling of panic.**

### *Anxiety Explained*

One way to understand anxiety is to think of it as 'free floating fear'. The Psychoanalyst Carl Jung referred to anxiety as 'fear spread thinly'.

This means a growing fear builds up inside the person and is projected onto something else. Fear within someone latches onto a symbolic representation of the fear.





## Unhelpful Interpretation

***Many of the causes of anxiety are the result of childhood experiences, because we 'understood' them with a child mindset.***

For example: Getting lost in the supermarket is a much bigger deal at five-years-old than at thirty-five years old.

We understood it and interpreted it as the 5 year old. The anxiety is still there in our mind but as a five-year-old experienced it. Like being in a 'time-warp' we are still experiencing the fear (anxiety) we felt as a child, and now we explaining it as about something else. What really created the anxiety has been helpfully forgotten.

It's as if our mind said: "Oh don't think about that, it was too unpleasant. Let's pretend it didn't happen."

No wonder the person suffering with anxiety disorders feels frustrated and anxious that they cannot understand their feelings.

The symptom is a 'pressure value' for the anxiety.

## Fight or Flight

Many have heard of the fight or flight response as a way of understanding how our body reacts during moments of danger. Our body goes on alert when there is a perceived threat in our environment.

This is automatic; an unconscious process which evolved to promote our survival. Imagine prehistoric man faced with a predator's snarling teeth. He had two choices: to fight or to flight (get away). His body reacts to help him do this. Adrenaline is released which suppress the non-emergency functions and diverts energy to those which are going to be most useful to deal with the threat.

The heart rate increases, the pupils dilate (letting in more light), sweat glands increase production (to prevent over heating) and the liver increases the production of Glycogen to provide energy to deal with the threat. All the offence and defence mechanisms are on full alert.

Once the threat has gone then a branch of our nervous system (parasympathetic) calms everything back down. The levels of adrenaline go back to normal and we go back to functioning how we would in everyday life, until the next threat and then we are ready to spur back into action.

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**Anxiety - Fears - Phobias**

# ANXIETY & STRESS

## What is the difference between Stress and Anxiety?

We are not just affect by what happened...but also our **interpretation of events**

### My life is great why do I feel anxious?

Many of us deal with stress by changing the circumstances or getting away from them, but with anxiety it is coming from inside the person's mind. We cannot get away from it so all we can do is stifle it down.

Of course one has an effect on the other. We feel our inner anxieties more when the stresses of the outside world are greater.

### I had a terrible experience at the dentist as a child, that must be why I get afraid now...

Of course most of the time this reasoning is in correct, but if our explanation for anxiety was correct, wouldn't it have made the anxiety go away?

Even though you were frightened at the dentist (for example) as a child, you are an adult now and you know there is nothing to be afraid of. Yet the person still feels anxiety.

### There must be something missing...



I find it useful to think of them as largely the same thing - BUT it's **where** they come from that makes the difference.

***Stress is a result of external pressures.***

We feel agitated and unhappy but we can attribute it to external things such as our job, relationships, financial issues. We know the symptoms are stress because when our external circumstances change then the stress symptoms do too.

***Anxiety on the other hand is the same feelings and symptoms but the stress is coming from inside the person's mind.***

Nervousness, anger and agitation are maintained even when the external circumstances change. It is *something inside ourselves but outside our own control.*

