

Quick Study Guide

Topic: Anxiety Disorders – Key Terms

Related Course(s): Psy1100, Psy3600

Anxiety Disorders – Key Terms

What Are Anxiety Disorders?

Anxiety disorders involve excessive fear or anxiety, are the most common of mental disorders and can cause people to avoid situations that trigger or worsen their symptoms. To be diagnosed with an anxiety disorder, the fear or anxiety must be 1) out of proportion to the situation or age inappropriate and 2) must hinder one's ability to function normally

Types of Anxiety Disorders

Generalized Anxiety Disorder – a chronic state of anxiety characterized by excessive worry, over a period of at least six months, about several life circumstance (most often family, money, work, and health); they experience of long-term anxiety with no explanation

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder: a disorder characterized by obsessions or compulsions. A diagnosis of OCD requires the presence of obsession and/or compulsions that are time-consuming (more than one hour a day), cause major distress, and impair work, social or other important function

Obsession – a thought or an image that keeps unwillingly intruding into a person's consciousness, though the person may consider it senseless or even unpleasant.

Compulsion – an action that a person feels compelled to repeat again and again in a stereotyped fashion, though he or she has no conscious desire to do so.

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder – severe psychological reaction to intensely traumatic events, including assault, rape, natural disaster, and wartime combat. Victims may re-experience the traumatic event in recollections or in nightmares, show diminished responsiveness to their present surroundings, and suffer physical symptoms and intense irritability.

Acute Stress Disorder – Acute Stress Disorder occurs in reaction to a traumatic event, just as PTSD, and the symptoms are similar. However, the symptoms occur between three days and one month after the event. About half of people with acute stress disorder go on to have PTSD.

Phobias, Specific Phobia – Intense, irrational fears of specific objects or situations although the objective danger posed by an anxiety-producing stimulus is typically small or nonexistent.

Social phobia – phobic disorder in which the person's anxiety is aroused by one or more social situations and is related to the person's fear of being humiliated or criticized. In childhood, this disorder typically takes the form of a paralyzing fear of strangers—peers as well as adults.

Panic disorder – anxiety that manifests itself in the form of panic attacks, an overwhelming combination of physical and psychological distress, that last from a few seconds to as long as several hours

Agoraphobia: the fear of being in situations where escape may be difficult or embarrassing, or help might not be available in the event of panic symptoms. A person with agoraphobia experiences this fear in situations like using public transportation, being in open spaces, or standing in line or being in a crowd. The individual actively avoids the situation, requires a companion or endures with intense fear or anxiety.