

# Anxiety Disorders

**Generalized Anxiety Disorder** - “excessive worry” about common everyday issues for at least 6 months.

## DSM-V Criteria: SPECIFIC PHOBIA

- A. Fear or anxiety about a specific object or situation (e.g., flying, heights, animals, receiving an injection, seeing blood).
- B. The phobic object or situation almost always provokes immediate fear or anxiety
- C. The phobic object or situation is actively avoided or endured with intense fear or anxiety
- D. The fear or anxiety is out of proportion to the actual danger posed by the specific object or situation and to the sociocultural context.
- E. The fear, anxiety or avoidance is persistent, typically lasting for 6 months or more.
- F. The disturbance is not better explained by the symptoms of another mental disorder

“I was worried all the time about everything. It didn't matter that there were no signs of problems, I just got upset. I was having trouble falling asleep at night, and I couldn't keep my mind focused at work. I felt angry at my family all the time.”

“I always thought I was just a worrier. I'd feel keyed up and unable to relax. At times it would come and go, and at times it would be constant. It could go on for days. I'd worry about what I was going to fix for a dinner party, or what would be a great present for somebody. I just couldn't let something go.”

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/generalized-anxiety-disorder-gad/index.shtml>

75% of individuals with specific phobias fear more than one object or situation

“Phobia” is an *irrational* fear:

Standing on the edge of the Grand Canyon on a windy day and afraid of heights? **RATIONAL** (*not a phobia*)

Standing on the second tier of a step-ladder, and afraid of heights? **IRRATIONAL** (*phobia*)

Common fears and their rate of prevalence in people with specific phobias

Public speaking (Glossophobia)	74%
Death (Necrophobia)	68%
Spiders (Arachnophobia)	30.50%
Darkness (Achluophobia)	11%
Heights (Acrophobia)	10%
Other people (Sociophobia)	7.90%
Flying (Aerophobia)	6.50%
Confined spaces (Claustrophobia)	2.50%
Open spaces (Agoraphobia)	2.20%
Lightning (Brontophobia)	2%

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov>

## Social Phobia -

Afraid of social situations – normal situations involving other people cause extreme anxiety

People with social phobia often realize that their phobia is nonsensical, but cannot escape the anxiety they feel when in social situations

## Panic Disorder - Persistent panic attacks

Have had at least 2 panic attacks in the last 6 months

## Agoraphobia - Anxiety about being in a place where escape might be difficult, for fear of a possible panic attack

People with agoraphobia fear open, social situations (e.g. the state fair, or a mall) for fear that something might happen to them (e.g. panic attack, diarrhea...) and they would not be able to escape

Non-surprisingly, people with agoraphobia tend to avoid these situations, or “endure” them despite high levels of anxiety.

You can have Agoraphobia (which is essentially fear of panic attacks) without ever having had a panic attack

**Obsessive Compulsive Disorder** - Preoccupation with obsessive thoughts (that cause anxiety) – and ritualistic and repetitive compulsions, which are the behaviors done to reduce the anxiety caused by the obsessions

### Obsessions

Unwanted and intrusive *thoughts* that cause anxiety

#### Examples

GERMS

Need for Symmetry

*Religious* obsession

Pathological *doubts*

### Compulsions

Ritualistic, repetitive *behaviors* that reduce anxiety

#### Examples

Hand Washing

Ordering / Arranging

Praying

Checking

Counting

Lifetime prevalence >1%

Many of us are “a little bit OCD”

does this cause anxiety? Feel *compelled* to fix it? →

That's *normal*



Pathological, diagnosable OCD causes *severe* anxiety, and interferes considerably with an individual's life

OCD symptoms become more severe under stress