



Understanding Mental Illness

Session Two: Understanding Anxiety

Webinars presented by the National Council for
Community Behavioral Healthcare in observance of
May is Mental Health Month

Program content based upon Mental Health First Aid USA



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Overview

- + Understanding Anxiety Disorders
 - Types of Anxiety Disorders
 - Signs & Symptoms
 - Risk factors

- + How to Help
 - *Panic Attacks*
 - *Reactions to Traumatic Events*
 - *Acute Anxiety*



What Is Mental Health First Aid?

Mental Health First Aid is the help offered to a person developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. The first aid is given until appropriate treatment and support are received or until the crisis resolves.

Why Mental Health First Aid?

- + Mental health problems are common.
- + Stigma is associated with mental health problems.
- + Many people are not well informed about mental health problems.
- + Professional help is not always on hand.
- + People often do not know how to respond.
- + People with mental health problems often do not seek help.



The Mental Health First Aid Action Plan

- + **A**ssess for risk of suicide or harm
- + **L**isten nonjudgmentally
- + **G**ive reassurance and information
- + **E**ncourage appropriate professional help
- + **E**ncourage self-help and other support strategies

What Is a Mental Disorder?

A **mental disorder** or **mental illness** is a diagnosable illness that:

- + Affects a person's thinking, emotional state, and behavior
- + Disrupts the person's ability to
 - Work
 - Carry out daily activities
 - Engage in satisfying relationships

U.S. Adults with a Mental Disorder in Any One Year



Type of Mental Disorder	% Adults
Anxiety disorder	18.1
Major depressive disorder	6.7
Substance use disorder	3.8
Bipolar disorder	2.6
Eating disorders	2.1
Schizophrenia	1.1
Any mental disorder	26.2



Recovery from Mental Illness

“Recovery is the process in which people are able to live, work, learn, and participate fully in their communities.”

“For some, this is the ability to live a fulfilling and productive life despite a disability.”

“For others, recovery implies the reduction or complete remission of symptoms.”

— *President’s New Freedom Commission on Mental Health, 2003*



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What Are Anxiety Disorders?

- + An anxiety disorder differs from normal stress and anxiety.
- + An *anxiety disorder* is more severe, lasts longer and interferes with work, regular activities and relationships.
- + Anxiety can range in severity from mild uneasiness to a panic attack.
- + Often co-occurs with mood disorders and substance use.

Types of Anxiety Disorders

- + Generalized Anxiety Disorder
 - Persistent, overwhelming and unfounded anxiety/worry accompanied by multiple physical and psychological symptoms
- + Panic Disorder
 - Recurring panic attacks & persistent worry about possibility of a future attack
- + Phobic Disorders
 - Avoids or restricts activities due to fear of specific objects/situations
- + Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder & Acute Stress Disorder
 - Anxiety after experiencing a distressing or catastrophic event
- + Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder
 - Obsessive thoughts & behaviors accompanying anxiety

U.S. Adults with an Anxiety Disorder in Any One Year



Type of Anxiety Disorder	% Adults
Specific phobia	8.7
Social phobia	6.8
Post-traumatic stress disorder	3.5
Generalized anxiety disorder	3.1
Panic disorder	2.7
Obsessive-compulsive disorder	1.0
Agoraphobia (without panic)	0.8
Any anxiety disorder	18.1

Signs and Symptoms of Anxiety

Physical

- + **Cardiovascular:** pounding heart, chest pain, rapid heartbeat, blushing
- + **Respiratory:** fast breathing, shortness of breath
- + **Neurological:** dizziness, headache, sweating, tingling, numbness
- + **Gastrointestinal:** choking, dry mouth, stomach pains, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea
- + **Musculoskeletal:** muscle aches and pains (especially neck, shoulders and back), restlessness, tremors and shaking, inability to relax

Signs and Symptoms of Anxiety

Psychological

- + Unrealistic or excessive fear and worry (about past and future events), mind racing or going blank, decreased concentration and memory, indecisiveness, irritability, impatience, anger, confusion, restlessness or feeling “on edge” or nervous, fatigue, sleep disturbance, vivid dreams

Behavioral

- + Avoidance of situations, obsessive or compulsive behavior, distress in social situations, phobic behavior

Risk Factors for Anxiety Disorders

- + People who are more likely to react with anxiety when they feel threatened are those who:
 - Have a more sensitive emotional nature
 - Have a history of anxiety in childhood or adolescence
 - Are female
 - Abuse alcohol
 - Experience a traumatic event
- + Medical conditions or side effects of some prescription medications
- + Intoxication or withdrawal from alcohol, cocaine, sedatives, and anti-anxiety medications



Assess for Risk of Suicide or Harm

The most common crisis to assess for with anxiety symptoms is an extreme level of anxiety:

- Panic attack
- Reaction to a traumatic event

Symptoms of a Panic Attack

- + Palpitations, pounding heart, or rapid heart rate
- + Sweating
- + Trembling and shaking
- + Shortness of breath, sensations of choking or smothering
- + Chest pain or discomfort
- + Abdominal distress or nausea
- + Dizziness, light-headedness, feeling faint, unsteady
- + Feelings of unreality
- + Feelings of being detached from oneself
- + Fear of losing control or going crazy
- + Fear of dying
- + Numbness or tingling
- + Chills or hot flashes

How to Help

If **you don't know** if it is a panic attack or other medical problem, seek medical assistance

If **the person believes** it is a panic attack:

- Ask the person if & how you can help
- Remain calm and speak in a reassuring but firm manner.
- Acknowledge that the terror feels very real, but reassure the person that he or she is safe and that the symptoms will pass.
- If appropriate, model a regular breathing pace for them to follow.

Traumatic Events

- + A “traumatic event” is any incident experienced or witnessed by a person that is perceived to be traumatic, including: accidents, assault, mass traumatic events, recurring trauma, and memories of past trauma.
- + People with mental illnesses — especially those who have been traumatized in the past — are at increased risk for serious reaction to trauma.

How to Help: After a Trauma

- + Ensure your safety first
- + Ask how the person would like to be helped and try to determine the person's immediate needs: water, shelter, food, clothing; other safety, comfort & dignity.
- + If the person is injured, seek medical assistance. Do not take over the role of any professionals (e.g., law enforcement, paramedics).
- + If the person does not appear injured, observe the person for any changes in physical or mental state.
- + Speak clearly, be patient and give truthful information.
- + It is more important to be genuinely caring than to say all the "right things."

How to Help

Encourage the person to:

- + Tell others what he or she needs
- + Identify sources of support
- + Use coping strategies that have helped in the past
- + Encourage seeking professional help if, for 4 weeks or more after the trauma, the person has feelings that are interfering with usual activities

Questions on Anxiety

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Mental Health First Aid in your Community

- + A recording of this webinar & the power point will be available on the National Council website 48 hours after it has ended.
- + Visit www.MentalHealthFirstAid.org for further information on the course and to find an instructor near you.
- + Become a fan of Mental Health First Aid USA on Facebook & get updates and information on a variety of mental health topics.
- + For any further questions, contact Bryan Gibb at bryang@thenationalcouncil.org or Susan Partain at susanp@thenationalcouncil.org or 202.684.3732.