

*Providing the Irish community with information, resources, and opportunities to talk about mental health.*

## Anxiety Disorders

Everyone deals with anxiety. It's part of the human experience to feel anxious or nervous about certain aspects of life. Anxiety becomes a problem when it is constantly present and prevents us from partaking in everyday activities.

When one is experiencing persistent and overwhelming feelings of fear and distress, they may be suffering from an anxiety disorder. Anxiety disorders keep people from carrying on a normal life. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, they are the most common mental health concern in the US, affecting 18% of Americans. There are several kinds of anxiety disorder.

### Types of Anxiety Disorders

#### Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)

GAD is the constant, relentless, and excessive worry or fear about everyday life. A person with GAD has exaggerated worries that can consume them for hours and can cause exhaustion, nausea, stress headaches, and muscular tension.

#### Social Anxiety Disorder

Social anxiety disorder invokes a feeling of overwhelming worry and/or self-consciousness surrounding everyday social situations. Not to be confused with shyness, social anxiety disorder causes an irrational fear of social humiliation, and is often associated with panic attack symptoms.

#### Panic Disorder

Those who suffer from panic disorder experience random and sudden feelings of terror. Physical symptoms can often mimic a heart attack, including chest pain, heart palpitations, dizziness, shortness of breath, and nausea.

#### Phobias

Phobias are characterized by an intense fear of a specific object or situation. This causes those who experience phobias to avoid ordinary situations in an attempt to control their triggers.

\* Anxiety Disorders." *Nami.org*, NAMI, Mar. 2015, <https://www.nami.org/NAMI/media/NAMI-Media/Images/FactSheets/Anxiety-Disorders-FS.pdf>

### Signs and Symptoms \*

#### Emotional symptoms

- Feelings of apprehension or dread
- Feeling tense and jumpy
- Restlessness or irritability
- Anticipating the worst and being watchful for signs of danger

#### Physical symptoms

- Pounding/racing heart and shortness of breath
- Upset stomach
- Sweating, tremors and twitches
- Headaches, fatigue and insomnia
- Upset stomach, frequent urination or diarrhea

### Causes

#### Genetics

According to NAMI, studies have shown that anxiety disorders run in families.

#### Stress

Environmental stress and trauma (including but not limited to abuse, death of a loved one, violence, or prolonged illness) can contribute to the development of anxiety disorders.

### Treatment

Though overwhelming, anxiety disorders can be treated. With individualized treatment symptoms can be managed, allowing people to get back to a fulfilling life. Common treatments are:

- Psychotherapy, including cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)
- Medications, including anti-anxiety medications and antidepressants
- Complementary health approaches, including stress and relaxation techniques.