

# Anxiety Disorders

Anxiety is a normal feeling that all people experience when they're facing a threat or danger, or when they're stressed. But some of us will go on feeling anxious and upset even when the stressful event has passed. Sometimes the feelings seem to happen on their own, without any specific event to trigger them. They may be so severe and long-lasting that they interfere with our daily lives and stop us doing what we want to do. These feelings, and the physical symptoms that often accompany them, are caused by a collection of illnesses called anxiety disorders.

Anxiety disorders are very common. At any one time, around one in 20 Australians will share the symptoms of an anxiety disorder. These symptoms often appear for the first time in young adults, but they can affect children and older people too. Women are also more likely to experience anxiety disorders than men.

These disorders change the way we feel, think and behave. If they're not treated, they can cause us considerable distress, and affect our relationships with the people we live and work with. Fortunately, anxiety disorders respond well to treatment and, after the appropriate therapy, many sufferers go on to enjoy symptom-free lives.

People suffering from anxiety disorders often feel:

- worried
- afraid
- upset and tense
- irritable; easily annoyed by other people
- as if they're losing control and "going crazy"
- as if something very bad is going to happen in their future

They also often have intense physical sensations:

- breathlessness
- heart palpitations
- sweating
- trembling or shaking
- insomnia
- choking or difficulty swallowing
- nausea, or stomach pains
- dizziness
- pins and needles

Some of the more common anxiety disorders include:

- Generalised Anxiety Disorder
- Panic Disorder
- Social Phobia
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

## Living with an anxiety disorder

Anyone living with an anxiety disorder has to struggle on many fronts: feeling anxious and fearful, worrying that this stress will affect their long-term health, coping with the physical symptoms, and gauging its effect on family, friends and co-workers. When you're overwhelmed by these feelings, it's easy to forget that an anxiety disorder is not an inevitable consequence of your personality, or situation, or who you are. Instead, there's good reason to stay positive. Remember, it's an illness that can be treated and, with the proper guidance, you can learn to manage it.



## South Pacific Private's approach to treating anxiety disorders

For people living with an anxiety disorder, successful treatment means learning skills to reduce their anxiety symptoms and discovering the roots of the problem: finding out how their history or lifestyle is impacting the disorder, and deciding on action for change.

### Our treatment programs

- **Evening Program:** One evening per week for eight weeks plus one Saturday, for minimal disruption to your usual daily routine
- **Changes Program:** Five days, Monday to Friday. (This program is also part of our Inpatient Program.) Understand how issues and events from your childhood can affect your adult life, and how recognising your own patterns of behaviour and choices is an important step towards bringing about change
- **Day Program:** 10 to 20 days from 9am to 4pm.\* (You're free to return home at the end of each day). It's another particularly beneficial option for people whose anxiety disorder is less severe  
\* The length will be based on your unique needs, following a professional assessment
- **Inpatient Program:** Generally one to five weeks of 24 hour professional inpatient care. The exact length of your stay will be tailored to your needs by the team responsible for your care, and will include full medical support if required. You'll be involved in the 'therapeutic community' of fellow inpatients, providing peer support and nurturing your self-confidence and awareness. When you leave, a comprehensive after-care plan will help you work on your relationships and discuss real-life situations following your treatment

### Key things to remember

- Anxiety disorders can be generalised or linked to specific things, situations or events
- Anxiety can have other "knock-on" effects such as physical symptoms and strain on relationships
- Roughly 1 in 20 Australians have some kind of anxiety disorder
- There are many strategies for treating anxiety disorders successfully

### Where to next?

To help lower anxiety levels you might like to try:

- a stress reducing activity such as meditation, walking or yoga
- cutting down on caffeine
- making sure you are getting a good night's sleep
- considering whether there are contributing factors to your anxiousness such as relationship issues

### For treatment options, other resources, or a complimentary assessment

- phone 1800 063 332
- visit [www.southpacificprivate.com.au](http://www.southpacificprivate.com.au)
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