
Research Papers

**Guidelines For Managing Anxiety Dr. Showkat Hussain (asstt. Prof)
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Abstract

Anxiety is a normal response of emotion when we feel under threat: it puts us on the alert and gets our body ready to fight with the danger. However problems arise when the threat is in our minds rather than a real physical danger, and when our thoughts and behaviours reinforce our anxiety instead of helping it melt away. Anxiety involves our thoughts, body reactions and behaviors. It is not a mental illness, it is a common psychological problem.

The origins of an anxious mood lie with thoughts-Even thoughts that were not aware of having! Anxious thoughts will lead to anxiety reactions in the body, which are then reinforced by what we do or fail to do behaviour – wise. And an anxious person then tends to think more anxious thoughts- keeping themselves stuck in the vicious circle.

ANXIETY DISORDERS

Anxiety disorders are most often characterized as having an element of fearfulness involved. According to Dr. Steve Dager, University of Washington associate Professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Harborview Medical Center, these disorders come about as a kind of impairment or overreactivity of the normal “flight or fight” response.

Types of anxiety disorders:

(i). Panic disorder is probably the best studied and understood of the anxiety disorders. It is characterized by repeated unprovoked attacks of terror, accompanied by physical symptoms, including chest pain, heart palpitations, shortness of breath, dizziness, weakness and sweating.

(II) Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) is “free-floating” anxiety or a constant unrealistic worry about two or more everyday occurrences which impact an individual's ability to complete these daily activities. GAD is associated with physical anxiety symptoms such as muscle aches, fatigue, difficulty in sleeping, sweating, dizziness and nausea.

(III) Phobia is a persistent, tense and irrational fear associated with a particular object or situation that leads to avoidance of the object or situation.

(IV) Social phobia is a persistent fear of one or more situations in which the person is exposed to possible scrutiny by others and fears that he or she may do something or act in a way that will be humiliating. Social phobias can also include extreme shyness.

(V) Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) is characterized by repeated, intrusive and unwanted thoughts (obsessions) that cause anxiety, often accompanied by ritualized behaviours (compulsions) that relieve this anxiety. Common obsessions include fear of dirt, germs or contamination or fear of harming someone; common compulsions are excessive cleaning, counting, double-checking and hoarding.

(VI) Post – traumatic stress disorder(PTSD) is caused when someone experiences a severely distressing

or traumatic event; individuals become so preoccupied with experience that they are unable to lead a normal life.

Guidelines for managing anxiety:

Focus on what you can control

One primary source of anxiety is worrying about uncontrollable factors such as sustaining an injury, playing a superior opponent, or a successful game outcome. Athletes whose thoughts centre on “ifs” are candidates for heightened anxiety. Quality competitors focus on their performance and reflect on the strategies they practiced in preparation for the contest. Anxiety lies in fear of the unknown. By focusing on what one can control, athletes become task-oriented and concentrate on immediate performance demands. Focus on strengths, not weaknesses, and what you can do, not what you cannot do.

Think about practice situations:

“Think practice.” If high anxiety is due to the performers perception of a threatening situation, it makes sense to reflect the times when sport skills were executed without these same unpleasant thoughts. These times are practice sessions. When athletes “think practice”, they are reflecting a relatively relaxed, non-threatening environment when their sport skills were performed successfully.

Remember the worst case scenario:

The worst case scenario reflects this simple question: what is the worst that can happen? If you were to walk across the street blindfolded, the worst case scenario is death, if you were struck by a car. Consequently, this sort of behaviour is unthinkable. Fortunately, sports is not a matter of life and death the reason for competing in sport is the enjoyment and pleasure it brings to its participants. If it is not enjoyable, perhaps it is time to think of doing something else for recreation or changing the situation (e.g. a change of team, coach, or sport type). Remember that the contest's outcome is not usually under the performer's control, so on thinking of the worst case scenario, you are placing sports in perspective. Sport should be fun. With very few exceptions, sports competition is not about making the Olympic team.

Keep active: Researchers have shown that engaging in physical activity reduces anxiety. This relaxing effect is one reason for engaging in the pre-game warm-up. Although the physiological basis of this response goes beyond imagination provides a physical outlet for heightened emotions such as anxiety rather than “bottling up” these emotions, and focuses the athlete's attention externally on performing a physical task rather than internally on undesirable emotions.

Conclusion:

The vast majority of athletes experience undue anxiety before and during competition. These fears reflect discrepancies between what the athletes perceive or is expected of him/her in a forthcoming contest and the athletes own feelings of competency and self efficacy help him/her to overcome the anxiety.

Reference:

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