

Anxiety Workshop

Statistics

Currently, in the United States

- 16-19 million people suffer from some type of anxiety disorder
- 26 million people will experience some type of anxiety problem during the course of their lives
- Anxiety disorders cost the U.S. more than \$42 billion a year, almost one third of the \$148 billion total mental health bill for the U.S.
- More than half of those costs are associated with the repeated use of healthcare services because many of the symptoms of anxiety look like physical problems

Where does anxiety come from?

- Anxiety is a helpful response at appropriate levels
- Anxiety works as a motivator to improve performance (i.e. may not prepare, iron your clothes, update your résumé, etc. for a job interview if you are not worried about making a good impression)
- However, when it reaches high levels it hurts performance levels

How is fear different from anxiety?

- Anxiety is a vague, future oriented mood-state
- Fear is a response to immediate physical threat

Fight or Flight – occurs when there is an immediate physical threat (fear)

- “Fight or flight” readies the body to either defend itself or run the other direction
- Autonomic Nervous System controls involuntary functions such as heart beat, breathing, digestion and this “fight or flight” response
- Example – You are walking at night through an alley alone and you hear movement behind you. Your body will react by producing the following symptoms.

Physical symptoms produced by the “Fight or Flight” response and their functions

- Accelerate heart rate – more blood to the muscles for upcoming struggle
- Rapid breathing – insures larger supply of oxygen
- Muscle tension – preparation for upcoming action
- Sweating – cooling of body during activity and natural lubrication so the person is harder to grab
- Dilation of pupils – increases entry of light to improve vision
- Suspension of digestive activity – reroutes blood to the muscles, which results in cramping and dry mouth
- Voiding of bladder and bowels – frees body for strenuous activity

Thinking affects the way you feel

- Less physical threats lead to focus on psychological stress
- Decrease in murders, animal attacks and chances of being involved in a war compared to 100 or more years ago
- As a result, people begin focusing on anxiety (vague and future oriented concerns about finances, health, family, etc.) and those concerns, not just fears, cause the “fight or flight” response

Cognitive Distortions – unrealistic ways of looking at life that many people who suffer from anxiety use frequently (see handout)

Thinking affects the way you feel

- Less physical threats lead to focus on psychological stress
- **People and situations do not cause emotions, how a person perceives those things causes emotions**

Automatic thoughts

- Much of a person’s thinking becomes automatic over time with repeated presentations
- Driving a car involves quickly judging distances, repetitive physical activity and interpreting the actions of other drivers and pedestrians. You don’t think about all the actions involved with driving (turn the key in the ignition, step on the gas, turn the wheel, etc.) or the directions that you take to go to work (left on Main, three stop lights then a right on Maple Street, etc.) you just do these things because you have done them so many times. They become automatic.
- Since people with anxiety problems tend to use the errors in thinking listed above more frequently, those can become automatic.
- Once they become automatic, anxious people become anxious because they are frequently engaging in negative thinking and are not aware of it. They only know that they are anxious and experiencing symptoms.

Reasons for distortions in thinking

- Previous experiences with specific negative situations
 - If a person is bitten by a dog, they may develop a fear of dogs. Or people involved in major accident may be terrified to get in a car
- Pre-existing conditions
 - Chronic overarousal (restless people who can’t sit still and do not look comfortable in their own skin)
 - Sense of uncontrollability (people who feel they are a victim to their environment)
 - High level of focus on threat-related stimuli (people who enter a situation and immediately look for the possible threat as a way in which to protect themselves, but end up increasing anxiety level)

- **Upbringing** – these types of environments tend to increase the risk of the anxiety in adulthood
 - Alcoholism in the family
 - Child abuse
 - Anxious parent
 - Overprotective parent
 - Reversal of parent/child roles(when parent becomes ill and the child is required to take on the adult responsibilities-usually only occurs in single parent families)
 - Lack of information about bodies and emotions

Changing your thinking

Challenge negative thoughts

- **What are the chances of this happening?**
 - I'm afraid of dogs because I was bitten by one, but what are the chances that this will happen again? How many people do I know have been bitten by a dog? How many dogs have I been around that have not bit me?
- **What's the worst that can happen and what would I do if it did?**
 - I'm terrified of public speaking. I'm worried that people are going to laugh at me or notice I'm nervous. If they do, it will not cause me to pass out and I would continue to speak until I was done. If people do not feel I'm a good speaker it does not affect who I am or how I'll live my life.
- **Where's the evidence?**
 - Don't let a feeling be your evidence. Look for actual reasons to back up your argument. You probably will have a hard time coming up with the evidence and, if you do, then you have something to work on in order to improve.

Positive Self-Talk

- **Running "tape" of negative comments (distortions) can strengthen errors in thinking**
- **Replace with your own tape that focuses on your positive attributes**
- **When thinking about weaknesses, be precise about what your concerns are. Vague descriptors or labels like "I'm a failure" only cause self-doubt. Be specific – "I'm not a failure, I'm just bad at ____." This is less painful and helps you to work on finding solutions**

Other ways to manage anxiety

Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)

- **Tensing and loosening of specific muscle groups in order to promote relaxation and improve insight into how to identify muscle tension and stress**
 - Sometime people cannot identify the physical signs of stress and/or tension until it is too late and they are suffering from back pain, headache, stomach pain, etc. (http://youtu.be/6_Wv146Coo)
- **Visual imagery or trigger word** – once you complete relaxation exercise, you visualize a calming scene (i.e. lying on the beach) or a word (i.e. relax). Over a long period of time of engaging in PMR and then either visualizing scene or repeating word, a person's body will relax on its own when just thinking about scene or word. This takes at least six months to do, but is very helpful when your in an environment in which you cannot use PMR such as at work.

Proper Breathing

- **Hyperventilation – drops level of carbon dioxide which affect the chemical systems in the body**
- **As result, blood vessels constrict decreasing the amount of oxygen to the brain causing the following symptoms**

Symptoms of hyperventilation

- **Brain**
 - Lightheadedness
 - Dizzy
 - Confusion
 - Blurred vision
 - Feelings of unreality
 - Breathlessness
- **Body**
 - Flushed
 - Sweaty
 - Chest pains
 - Frequent sighs and yawns

Different Ways to Breathe

- **Upper chest breathing occurs during strenuous exercise so “fight or flight” response may be a trigger**
- **Focus on figure may cause people to hold in their stomachs or wear tight fitting clothes, which restricts proper breathing**
- **Proper breathing requires that you get your diaphragm involved by expanding your stomach. To check that your breathing is correct, place your hand on you stomach just above your belly button and your other hand on your chest. Take a few breaths and if the hand on your chest moves more than the hand on your stomach, you are breathing wrong.**
- **8 to 16 breaths per minute is average**

Anxiety Disorders

Panic Disorder - recurrent, unexpected panic attacks resulting in concerns about physical health and/or loss of sanity (notice how similarly the symptoms of panic attacks mirror the symptoms of hyperventilation and “fight or flight”

Panic attack symptoms

- Accelerated heart rate
- Shaking
- Sweating
- Abdominal distress
- Numbness in extremities
- Dizziness
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pains
- Feelings of unreality
- Hot flashes or chills

“Fight or Flight” symptoms

- Accelerated heart rate
- Rapid or deeper breathing
- Muscle tension
- Sweating
- Dilation of pupils
- Suspension of digestive activity
- Voiding of bladder and bowels

Improper breathing symptoms

- Lightheadedness
- Dizziness
- Confusion
- Blurred vision
- Feelings of unreality
- Breathlessness
- Flushed
- Sweaty
- Chest pains

Panic Disorder with Agoraphobia

– Concern about experiencing future panic attacks becomes so severe that the person limits or completely stops leaving their house

Generalized Anxiety Disorder

- Excessive, uncontrollable worry about multiple situations for more than six months. Person has difficulties generating solutions that would ↓ anxiety
- Symptoms
 - Panic attacks
 - Muscle tension (neck and shoulders)
 - Restlessness
 - Fatigue
 - Irritability
 - Jumpy, difficulties concentrating
 - Poor sleep

Social Phobia

- **Extreme fear of embarrassing or humiliating oneself in public to the point that it changes one's behavior**
- **Common situations for those suffering from social phobia include:**
 - Using public bathrooms
 - Eating in public
 - Talking to people on the phone
 - Signing your name in front of people
 - Public speaking

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

- **Obsessions are intrusive, disturbing thoughts that cause the person significant anxiety or distress**
 - Most common are
 1. **Contamination (“Shaking hands will give me germs that will cause a deadly illness”)**
 2. **Aggressive impulses (“I’m worried that I’ll spontaneously punch a stranger”)**
 3. **Sexual content (“I’m worried that I might suddenly touch a stranger inappropriately”)**
 4. **Somatic concerns (“Every pain I have is an indication that I’m dying from an undiagnosed disease.”)**
 5. **Need for symmetry (“I can’t stop thinking about how messy my co-worker’s desk is”)**
- **Compulsions are repetitive, ritualistic behaviors performed in order to minimize distress and anxiety**
 - Most common are cleaning and checking

The Link

- **Compulsions performed in order to alleviate the anxiety of the obsession usually have an understandable relationship**
 - Fear of contamination leads to excessive cleaning
- **However, sometimes one might have nothing to do with the other**
 - “Step on a crack and break your mother’s back”

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

- **A group of severe and distressing symptoms that follow exposure to an event that involves real or perceived physical danger to self or someone else and feelings of helplessness, horror or intense fear (examples of events include sexual assault, combat, severe car accident, mugging, etc.)**
- **Symptoms**
 - Nightmares about event and/or flashbacks (visual and/or auditory reminders of events when awake)
 - Anger management problems

- Emotional numbness (mind’s defense mechanism – symptoms and memories are so distressing that the brain stops feeling in order to cope; however, the brain cannot discriminate so the person does not feel good things either and that effects relationships, interests and motivation)
- Hypervigilance (overly aware of environment), exaggerated startle response (jumpy), poor sleep

Specific Phobias

- Intense fear of specific objects or situations that result in significant distress, panic attacks and/or extreme changes in behavior

Five different types

Blood-Injection Type

- **Belonephobia** - Fear of needles or pointed objects
- **Haemophobia** - Fear of blood or bleeding

Natural Environment Type

- **Achluophobia** - Fear of darkness
- **Hydrophobia** - Fear of water

Animal Type

- **Arachnophobia** - Fear of spiders
- **Equinophobia** - Fear of horses

Situational Type

- **Claustrophobia** - Fear of confined spaces
- **Scriptophobia** - Fear of writing in public

Other Types

- **Coulrophobia** - Fear of clowns
- **Phobophobia** - Fear of phobias

Other things to look for

- **Fatigue** – frequently shows up as a symptom in anxiety disorders because being on edge, constantly worrying, suffering from frequent muscle tension, etc. can be physically exhausting
 - Besides physical pain, people who suffer from anxiety disorders have a higher frequency of illness because of lowered immune systems
- **Avoidance** – depending on the particular type of anxiety, a good indication of difficulties are frequent attempts at avoiding specific situations (i.e. Social Phobia – public speaking, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder – shaking hands, Panic Disorder – crowds, etc.)
- **Substance abuse** – alcohol abuse is common because it is a depressant and reduces those feelings of the “fight or flight” response, restlessness, worry and edginess

Always rule out medical reasons

- **Cardiovascular – Mitral Valve Prolapse is a defect in the heart valve causing palpitations, shortness of breath and/ or chest pains**
- **Thyroid condition – can look like panic attacks**
- **Asthma – shortness of breath**
- **Man-made chemicals (prescription drugs, caffeine, alcohol, marijuana) - can mimic physical symptoms or produce excessive worry/paranoia**

Treatment Options

- **Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT)**
 - **Cognitive - work to identify distortions and then change thinking**
 - **Behavior – identify avoidance behaviors and help person gradually face those situations in order to reduce anxiety**
- **Improvements in coping strategies – improve insight into physical signs of anxiety (tension, breathing) and improve areas such as Problem solving and Time management skills**
- **Processing of trauma – specific to Phobias and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder**
 - **Processing of event through discussion that becomes gradually more detailed so that the mind can get used to the distressing feelings associated with those memories with the ultimate goal of being able to cope without debilitating symptoms**
 - **Must be done by a mental health professional with experience in trauma treatment because you are asking the patient to re-experience the event**
- **Medications**
 1. **Antidepressants – many of the same neurotransmitters (brain chemicals) that cause anxiety also cause depression so antidepressants do work**
 2. **Benzodiazepines (Valium, Xanax, Ativan)**
 - Pros – quickest and most effective way to decrease anxiety**
 - Cons – risk of addiction (so many Drs will not prescribe if you have a substance abuse history)**
 - **Since they are addictive, a doctor must supervise someone who is going to stop because of possible withdrawal symptoms**



The Kentucky Employee Assistance Program (KEAP) is dedicated to helping employees find solutions to the personal problems that may hinder their effectiveness at work.

Problems concerning marital, family, or emotional distress, alcoholism and drug abuse, financial or even medical issues can seriously diminish an individual's job performance. As a progressive employer the Commonwealth of Kentucky recognizes that there are positive, workable solutions to many of these problems that trouble employees.

State employees and their dependents are eligible for KEAP services. There is no cost for its information or referral services. All of your contact with KEAP is confidential as required by state and federal law. Employee involvement with KEAP is permitted on state time with the supervisor's prior approval. Supervisors may refer employees to KEAP when job performance deteriorates, however participation is voluntary.

KEAP Services

- **Assessment:** Each person seeking assistance will receive a confidential assessment with a trained EAP professional. The purpose of the assessment is to clearly identify the problem. The assessment may be conducted face-to-face or by telephone.
- **Referral:** Once a thorough assessment is conducted the EAP professional may make a referral to the most appropriate professional or resource and provide assistance in making contact with those resources.
- **Follow-up:** After making the referral, the EAP professional maintains intermittent contact with the employee to ensure that the process has gone smoothly and the needed services are being provided.
- **Crisis Intervention:** When critical incidents or workplace trauma occur, the EAP can provide crisis response. Crisis debriefings provide individuals with information about possible reactions that may follow a critical incident. A structured environment allows individuals to discuss their thoughts and reactions to the incident.
- **Grief Response:** When death affects a workgroup, KEAP is available to provide grief response groups.
- **Management Consultation:** Supervisors may consult with EAP professionals for guidance regarding employees and difficult workplace situations.
- **Education:** KEAP staff members are available for staff development training opportunities.

If you or your dependents could benefit from this assessment and referral service, call the KEAP office for more information. In Frankfort call 502-564-5788, or use the toll-free **1-800-445-KEAP** number from anywhere in the state. Kentucky State Police also have an Employee Assistance Program. They can be reached at 502-573-1719.

<https://personnel.ky.gov/Pages/KEAP.aspx>

Anxiety Resources at the State Library

Two options for finding materials at the State Library:

1. KDLA WorldCat Discovery:
<http://kdla.ky.gov/common/Pages/WorldCatDiscovery.aspx>
 2. Kentucky Libraries Unbound (KLU):
<http://kdla.ky.gov/employees/downloadingmedia/Pages/default.aspx>
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To search for materials in KDLA WorldCat Discovery:

- Go to our homepage: <http://kdla.ky.gov>
 - Click on “KDLA Catalog”
 - In the Search box, enter the topic that interests you (or author, title, etc.)
 - Click the magnifying glass
 - You can filter your results using the options on left-hand side
 - From your list of results, click on the title of the item that interests you
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To request an item from KDLA WorldCat Discovery:

- Click on the “Place hold” button
 - Sign In using your KDLA library account number and password
 - Choose your Pickup location: have the item delivered to you through messenger mail/UPS or pick it up at KDLA
 - Remember, we will deliver anything in our collection to you, even if you work outside Frankfort
 - Click “Submit” – you’re done!
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Kentucky Libraries Unbound, our eBook and audiobook downloading service:

- Go to our homepage: <http://kdla.ky.gov>
- Hover over the “State Employees” heading
- Click “Downloading Audiobooks and eBooks”

- Click the “Kentucky Libraries Unbound” link
 - Search for books in KLU!
 - **OR**, go directly to KLU: <http://kyunbound.lib.overdrive.com>
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More free KDLA services for state employees:

- Interlibrary Loan (ILL) – we borrow materials for you from other libraries
 - Submit an ILL request using our Ask A Librarian form **OR** request it through KDLA WorldCat Discovery
 - Ask A Librarian – use this service to:
 - Get help finding materials, research assistance, or just ask a question
 - To use our Ask A Librarian service, go to our homepage: <http://kdla.ky.gov>
 - Hover over “State Employees”
 - Click “Ask A Librarian”
 - Fill it out and click “Submit”
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