

ANXIETY SYMPTOMS IN DEPRESSION

Understanding and managing
anxiety symptoms in depression



FURTHER INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

Information, knowledge, and support can help you manage daily life with anxiety and depression. Follow these links to useful websites and resources for further information and support.

GAMIAN-EUROPE website

<https://www.gamian.eu>

Anxiety & Depression Association of America

<https://adaa.org>

National Institute of Mental Health

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/anxiety-disorders>

Mental Health Europe (MHE)

<https://www.mhe-sme.org/who-we-are-2/>

Mind

<https://www.mind.org.uk>

This brochure has been developed specifically for people who have depression with anxiety symptoms. It has been co-created by people who have experience of depression with anxiety symptoms who are members of Global Alliance of Mental Illness Advocacy Networks-Europe (GAMIAN-Europe), a pan-European organization representing and advocating for the interests and rights of people affected by mental ill-health, and by SERVIER.

This brochure contains personal insights from people with first-hand experience of depression with anxiety symptoms and can be read in conjunction with previous publications such as **A guide to depression and its treatment** and **Take care and be kind to yourself** available at <https://www.gamian.eu/publications/>.

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WHAT IS ANXIETY?

Anxiety steals time and steals from the moment.

Anxiety happens; it's not a choice, it's a feeling that overwhelms me.

KEY INSIGHTS:
ANXIETY SYMPTOMS
ARE VARIABLE AND
PROGRESSIVE

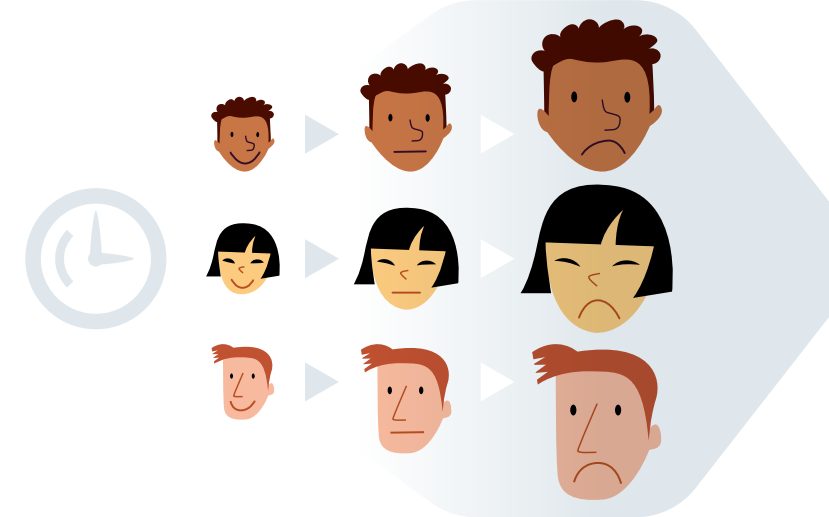


VARIABLE

Depression and anxiety are among the most common mental health conditions and often occur together.¹ In up to 90% of cases, the conditions either occur at the same time or precede one another.² And people affected by both depression and anxiety at the same time may have more severe symptoms than people who have either depression or anxiety.¹

Anxiety is a natural emotion and part of the body's natural reaction to a threat.³ Experiencing occasional anxiety is normal, and everyone has feelings of anxiety at some point in their life.⁴ For example, people can feel worried and anxious about problems at work, relationships, finances, or having a medical test. During times like these, feeling anxious can be perfectly normal.

However, some people find it hard to control their worries and anxious feelings and having depression with anxiety symptoms can have a considerable impact on daily functioning and quality of life.⁵ Although it can be difficult at these moments, it is important to remember that effective medications and/or psychological therapies are available.⁶



PROGRESSIVE

Quotes and insights reflect the experiences of people who have depression with anxiety symptoms and do not necessarily reflect medical and scientific evidence or practice.

1. Van Ameringen M. Comorbid anxiety and depression in adults: Epidemiology, clinical manifestations, and diagnosis. UpToDate. Accessed November 11, 2021. <https://www.uptodate.com/contents/comorbid-anxiety-and-depression-in-adults-epidemiology-clinical-manifestations-and-diagnosis#H537975>.
2. Möller HJ, Bandelow B, Volz HP, et al. The relevance of 'mixed anxiety and depression' as a diagnostic category in clinical practice. *Eur Arch Psychiatry Clin Neurosci*. 2016;266(8):725-736.
3. Steimer T. The biology of fear- and anxiety-related behaviors. *Dialogues Clin Neurosci*. 2002;4(3):231-249.
4. National Health Service. Every mind matters. Feeling anxious? Accessed November 11, 2021. <https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/mental-health-issues/anxiety/>.
5. ICD-11 Version: 05/2021. 6A73 Mixed depressive and anxiety disorder. Accessed November 11, 2021. <https://icd.who.int/browse11/l-m/en#/http://id.who.int/icd/entity/314468192>.
6. Coplan JD, Aaronson CJ, Panthangi V, et al.. Treating comorbid anxiety and depression: Psychosocial and pharmacological approaches. *World J Psychiatry*. 2015;5(4):366-378.

KEY INSIGHTS

Everyone will, at some point, confront anxiety and fear. Most people with depression report they have experienced anxiety symptoms at some point in their lives.

It's important that people understand this isn't a choice; **nobody wants to be anxious.**

People describe an "anxiety scale," which they are aware of moving along. As physical symptoms increase, anxiety becomes more severe. And as the anxiety becomes more severe, so do the physical symptoms.

DEFINING ANXIETY SYMPTOMS IN DEPRESSION

Anxious thoughts can detract from real life and take away precious time and opportunities. People with depression who experience anxiety symptoms talk of “never-ending” thoughts and how this can prompt a sense of loss and losing control.

Anxiety symptoms prevent them from “living in the present moment” making it hard to make eye contact and speak; they feel cut off from the world and social contact. Things that were previously a joy somehow get lost in the anxiousness and things that used to come naturally are now difficult.

Anxiety starts as unpleasant and scary thoughts.

It frustrates and causes discomfort – similar to a mosquito!

It's like an octopus with many tentacles that can wrap around you!

Anxiety symptoms in depression can be compared to a lion – powerful and dangerous!

The interactions between anxiety symptoms and depressive symptoms are complicated, with one generally appearing to be more dominant than the other.^{1,2}

To understand depression with anxiety symptoms, it's helpful to understand what each of them is:

1

Depression: Depression is an illness that affects different people in different ways. People living with depression can experience feelings of being intensely sad, miserable, and/or hopeless. They have little or no interest or pleasure in any activities³

2

Anxiety: Anxiety is the fearful anticipation of future danger, which is accompanied by feelings of worry and distress. People with anxiety find it difficult to control worry and to keep worrisome thoughts from interfering with daily life.³

Depression with anxiety symptoms is defined by the American Psychiatric Association as a condition where the symptoms of both anxiety and depression are present for more days than they are not over a period of 2 weeks or more.³ Depressive symptoms include depressed mood or reduced interest or pleasure in activities. Anxiety symptoms include feeling nervous or on edge, not being able to control worrying thoughts, fear that something awful will happen, and having trouble relaxing.⁴

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KEY INSIGHTS

Some people find it **hard to explain or describe their anxiety symptoms**, which for many, are continuously changing.

People experience a **wide range** of symptoms including **fear, panic, and apprehension**. And, feeling **uneasy, nervous, or out of control** all contribute to a sense of anxiety.

Some people experience **physical symptoms** such as a racing heart, trembling, and sweating.

1. Rapaport MH. Prevalence, recognition, and treatment of comorbid depression and anxiety. *J Clin Psychiatry*. 2001;62(suppl 24):6-10.
2. Van Ameringen M. Comorbid anxiety and depression in adults: epidemiology, clinical manifestations, and diagnosis. UpToDate. Accessed November 11, 2021. <https://www.uptodate.com/contents/comorbid-anxiety-and-depression-in-adults-epidemiology-clinical-manifestations-and-diagnosis#H537975>.
3. American Psychiatric Association. Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th ed. (DSM-5®), Fifth Edition 2013.
4. ICD-11 Version: 05/2021. 6A73 Mixed depressive and anxiety disorder. Accessed November 11, 2021. <https://icd.who.int/browse11/l-m/en#/http://id.who.int/icd/entity/314468192>.

THE VARIABLE NATURE OF ANXIETY SYMPTOMS IN DEPRESSION

“Depression is a lack of energy and motivation whereas anxiety is too much energy, which makes the depression worse.”

“The feelings are continuously changing. They just go around in a circle, sometimes with anxiety worse than depression, and then it goes the other way round.”

“Anxiety and depression are all mixed up with one sometimes worse than the other – it’s like dancing tango!”

Although depression with anxiety symptoms can be highly variable, they may often include several of the following:^{1,2}

IRRITABILITY
ANTICIPATING THE WORST
FEELING AGITATED AND RESTLESS
WORRY
DIFFICULTY CONCENTRATING
BEING DISTRACTED AND INDECISIVE
GETTING TIRED EASILY
LACK OF ENERGY
SLEEP PROBLEMS
MUSCLE TENSION, PAINS, AND HEADACHES
DRY MOUTH, NAUSEA, AND VOMITING
PALPITATIONS AND CHEST PAINS
SHORTNESS OF BREATH
DIZZINESS

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1. ICD-11 Version: 05/2021. 6A73 Mixed depressive and anxiety disorder. Accessed November 11, 2021. <https://icd.who.int/browse11/l-m/en#/http://id.who.int/icd/entity/314468192>.
2. Tiller JW. Depression and anxiety. *Med J Aust.* 2013;199(S6):S28–S31.

KEY INSIGHTS

Although the way anxiety symptoms feel can vary from person to person, they often **get progressively worse** with anxious thoughts and feelings **following a circular pattern.**

Some people **feel high levels of energy**, a sense of **restlessness**, and an **inability to focus.**

Conversely, others link it with feelings of **low energy and low self-esteem**, and with a sense of being unable to do anything “right”.



STIGMA, MYTHS, AND MISCONCEPTIONS

Worrying about the stigma can trigger or heighten feelings of anxiety.

It's hard to talk to people if they think of depression and anxiety as taboo subjects.

Self-stigma can occur when people who have depression with anxiety symptoms internalize public attitudes and suffer negative consequences as a result. Self-stigma and internalization make it harder to talk to a health care professional about anxiety and open a dialogue about treatment.

Societal stigma needs to be more widely addressed.

It's reassuring that people are beginning to talk more openly and honestly about anxiety.



Five of the biggest myths about anxiety:

- "Anxiety is no big deal"**
NOT TRUE. Anxiety symptoms can have a substantial impact on everyday life¹
- "All anxiety is the same"**
NOT TRUE. There are several different types of anxiety, and anxiety affects different people in different ways.² Similarly, depression with anxiety symptoms can vary from person to person²
- "Anxiety and depression are not related"**
NOT TRUE. It is very common for people to have both.³ In up to 90% of cases, the conditions either occur at the same time, or precede one another¹
- "It's obvious when someone is anxious"**
NOT TRUE. Although depression with anxiety symptoms is extremely debilitating to those who suffer from it,⁴ symptoms can be vague and nonspecific¹ and might not be noticeable to people around them.
- "Anxiety cannot be treated"**
NOT TRUE. Anxiety symptoms associated with depression are highly treatable and there are several different options available for those requiring treatment.^{1,4} But unfortunately, not everyone seeks help.¹

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For people with depression with anxiety, **stigma and discrimination** can make their difficulties worse and make it harder to recover.

An **increased awareness and deeper understanding** of the impacts of anxiety will help to abolish the stigma.

An important step toward treatment is removing the stigma through **dispelling the myths and misconceptions** that surround it.

1. Tiller JW. Depression and anxiety. *Med J Aust.* 2013;199(S6):S28-S31.
 2. American Psychiatric Association. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-5.* 5th ed. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association Publishing; 2013.
 3. Shevlin M, Hyland P, Nolan E, et al. ICD-11 'mixed depressive and anxiety disorder' is clinical rather than sub-clinical and more common than anxiety and depression in the general population. *Br J Clin Psychol.* 2022;61(1):18-36.
 4. Rapaport MH. Prevalence, recognition, and treatment of comorbid depression and anxiety. *J Clin Psychiatry.* 2001;62(suppl 24):6-10.

There are a **wide range of "triggers"** including short- and long-term **stress**, work **pressures**, social situations, and lifestyle factors.

Specific triggers can depend on how a situation or experience is **perceived**, and **personal feelings** can be an important influence on triggers.

Recognizing and avoiding anxiety triggers is an important strategy to limit the impact of anxiety on everyday life. Some people may not be aware of or recognize specific triggers and might need **help from family, friends, and health care professionals**.

RECOGNIZING THE ANXIETY TRIGGERS



It's usually possible to recognize your anxiety trigger and some triggers are easier to avoid than others.



It is important to differentiate between a trigger and a source of anxiety.



Triggers can be all about your own perception and personal feelings have an impact on triggers and their effect.



Sometimes it's not about avoiding the trigger, it's about figuring out what helps you to de-escalate the impact of that trigger.



If you are struggling to recognize your triggers, don't be afraid to ask for help from the people around you.

Symptoms of anxiety can be brought on by different experiences and triggers.¹ Being exposed to potentially harmful or worrying triggers can spark feelings of anxiety. But it may not always be clear what you are feeling anxious about. Not knowing or recognizing what triggers your anxiety can intensify it, which can be very distressing.²

Although anxiety symptoms can be triggered for no reason at all, they are generally associated with single or multiple triggers. Medical experts recognize that anxiety symptoms are often associated with:¹

STRESSFUL LIFE EVENTS
HEALTH ISSUES
MEDICATIONS
DRUGS OR ALCOHOL

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1. Mayo Clinic. Anxiety disorders. Symptoms and causes. Accessed November 11, 2021. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/anxiety/symptoms-causes/syc-20350961>.
2. National Health Service. Symptoms - Generalised anxiety disorder in adults. Accessed November 11, 2021. <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/generalised-anxiety-disorder/symptoms/>.



TOP TIPS TO HELP YOU MANAGE YOUR ANXIETY TRIGGERS

People with depression with anxiety symptoms experience many common triggers



People who have depression with anxiety symptoms understand that managing anxiety triggers can sometimes be difficult. Here they provide some top tips to help you to manage your triggers.

RECOGNIZE YOUR TRIGGERS

Keep a journal or diary of what you are doing and how you feel at different times to help identify your triggers. You should also make a note of what is going well.

Make a note of what happens when you get anxious. This will help you identify early signs.

IF YOU CAN'T AVOID YOUR TRIGGERS, LIMIT OR LEARN TO MANAGE THEM

Know your boundaries and try to enforce them. Identify what you can and cannot tolerate in an anxiety-provoking situation.

Try to cut down or avoid things like caffeine, sugar, and alcohol.

Shift your focus and attention away from your anxiety – exercise and relaxation are great ways to move your focus away from your worrying thoughts.

Train the mind to be calmer, more at ease, and less reactive. Meditation helps you to challenge anxious thoughts and to be less triggered by worry.

LET YOURSELF JUST BE

Adopting an attitude of acceptance will help you tolerate situations that trigger anxiety symptoms.

Focus on what you can do and focus on the positive aspects of your life.



MANAGING ANXIETY SYMPTOMS IN DEPRESSION

“Strategies and techniques that promote relaxation can overcome the impact and consequences of anxiety.”

“Talking to others and sharing your personal story and experiences is an enormous help. Finding similarities with other people will help you to feel less alone.”

“When you're finding it hard to move forward, it's important to accept that professional help is most likely required.”

Managing depression with anxiety symptoms involves prevention as well as treatment, and medical treatment isn't necessary for all people with anxiety symptoms. Research has shown that lifestyle changes may be enough to avoid the triggers and effectively manage anxiety.¹

However, many people who have depression with anxiety symptoms will benefit from the wide range of effective treatments that are available, which can address the symptoms and help people lead more manageable day-to-day lives. Treatment can involve medications and/or psychological therapies, which are sometimes called talking therapies.²

Yet not everyone gets help. Despite the availability of treatments, 40% of people affected do not seek treatment.³

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1. Null G, Pennesi L. Diet and lifestyle intervention on chronic moderate to severe depression and anxiety and other chronic conditions. *Complement Ther Clin Pract*. 2017;29:189–193.
2. Anxiety & Depression Association of America (ADAA). Treatment. Accessed November 11, 2021. <https://adaa.org/understanding-anxiety/depression/treatment>.
3. Tiller JW. Depression and anxiety. *Med J Aust*. 2013;199(S6):S28–S31.

KEY INSIGHTS

It's important to recognize the positive impacts and benefits of treatment and **accept treatment as a valuable tool**.

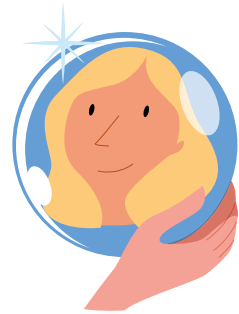
Although it might take time, **perseverance is key when finding a treatment that is most appropriate for you**.

Seeking out **support programs and sharing personal experiences** can play an important role in recovery.



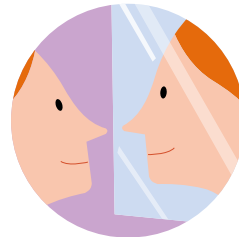
TOP TIPS TO LOWER THE IMPACT OF ANXIETY SYMPTOMS ON EVERYDAY LIFE

People who have depression with anxiety symptoms recognize that living with this condition can be very difficult, but there are steps you can take that will help. Here they provide some top tips to help you lower the impact of anxiety on your everyday life.



ACCEPT YOUR ANXIETY

Accepting your anxiety can make you feel empowered and can be the first step toward engaging in treatment.



BE KIND TO YOURSELF

Reassure yourself that the feelings will not last forever. It's important to be kind to yourself and notice the good things too.



UNDERSTAND YOUR ANXIETY

Read and learn more about anxiety and depression so you can feel more in control – the more you know, the better prepared you will be to manage symptoms.

Help family and friends understand your condition so they can support you.

Keep a journal or diary of the anxious thoughts and feelings you experience.



CHALLENGE YOUR THOUGHTS

Challenging unhelpful thoughts and trying to be more objective will help you feel less anxious.

Consider the whole picture and change the way you think about situations that make you anxious.

Thinking positive thoughts instead of worrying ones will help reduce anxiety and depression.

If you notice you're caught up in a worrying situation, know that you have the power to break the cycle.



MAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF

Calm the body to calm the mind through yoga and meditation. Reduce tension and focus awareness through relaxation, mindfulness, or breathing exercises.

Listen to relaxing music or audio books, or try drawing.



JOIN SUPPORT GROUPS

Self-help and support groups allow you to share your concerns and achievements with others who have experienced similar feelings and emotions.



GET TOGETHER WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Whether in person, on the phone, or via the computer, social connections can help you feel supported and less isolated.

Talking to someone you trust about what's making you anxious can be a relief. Just having someone listen to you and show they care can be a help in itself.



SHIFT YOUR FOCUS AND LEARN TO RELAX

Meditation and mindfulness can help you relax and learn to manage potentially anxious thoughts.



SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP AND DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK QUESTIONS

Talk to your health care provider so that you can work together to find the best way to move forward.



LIVE A HEALTHIER LIFESTYLE

Exercise regularly, eat a healthy, balanced diet, and make sure you get enough sleep.



MOVE FORWARD WITH SMALL STEPS

There are many positive steps you can take to reduce the impact of anxiety and depression, and each small step will move you forward.

ANXIETY SYMPTOMS IN DEPRESSION

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Do not change or stop your treatment without advice from a health care professional, such as your referring doctor.

If your symptoms worsen, please consult a health care professional, such as your referring doctor.



This document has been co-created by GAMIAN-Europe and Servier.