



# Anxiety Disorders

**For Prelims:** Anxiety, Anxiety disorders, [Mental Health](#)

**For Mains:** Mental Health in India, De-Stigmatizing Mental Health.

## Why in News?

Recently, there has been a growing recognition of the **impact of anxiety disorders** on individuals' **daily lives and overall well-being**. These common mental health conditions affect a significant portion of the population and can lead to persistent distress and impairment.

- Anxiety is a normal emotion that **can become problematic** when it becomes **persistent and disruptive**. In such cases, it may **indicate an anxiety disorder** that requires attention and appropriate treatment.

## What is Anxiety disorder?

- **About:**
  - Anxiety disorders are a **group of mental health conditions** that involve **excessive and irrational fear and worry** about various aspects of life.
  - Anxiety disorders can affect anyone, regardless of age, gender, culture, or background.
- **Historical Context of Anxiety Disorders:**
  - Anxiety disorders were historically **classified within mood disorders** until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. **Sigmund Freud** introduced the concept of "**anxiety neurosis**" to differentiate anxiety symptoms from depression.
  - Freud's original anxiety neurosis included people with phobias and panic attacks.
    - Anxiety neurosis is further categorized into **anxiety neurosis** (people with mainly psychological symptoms of anxiety) **and anxiety hysteria** (people with phobias and physical symptoms of anxiety).
- **Prevalence:**
  - According to India's **National Mental Health Survey**, neurosis and stress-related disorders have a **prevalence of 3.5% in India**.
    - These disorders are more commonly observed in women and are often overlooked or misdiagnosed in primary care settings. Childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood are considered high-risk periods for the onset of anxiety disorders.
- **Clinical Features of Common Anxiety Disorders:**
  - **Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD):**
    - **Excessive worrying** lasting over six months, not restricted to specific circumstances, and often accompanied by physical symptoms and distress.
  - **Panic Disorder:**
    - Recurrent, unexpected panic attacks characterized by intense physical symptoms and fear of catastrophic outcomes.
  - **Social Anxiety Disorder:**
    - Intense fear of **negative evaluation by others**, resulting in avoidance of social

situations and significant distress.

- **Separation Anxiety Disorder:**
  - Fear and distress concerning **separation from attachment figures**, accompanied by excessive worry about potential harm.
- **Specific Phobias:**
  - **Irrational fear of specific objects, animals, or situations.**
- **Causes For Anxiety Disorders:**
  - **Genetics:**
    - An increased likelihood of anxiety disorders can be observed in individuals with a **family history of anxiety**, suggesting a genetic predisposition.
  - **Brain Chemistry:**
    - **Imbalances in neurotransmitters**, which are responsible for regulating mood and emotions, may play a role in the development of anxiety disorders.
  - **Personality Traits:**
    - Certain personality traits, such as being **shy, perfectionistic, or prone to stress**, can make individuals more susceptible to developing an anxiety disorder.
  - **Life Events:**
    - **Traumatic or stressful experiences, such as abuse, violence, loss, or illness**, can trigger or exacerbate anxiety disorders. Conversely, even positive life events like marriage, having a baby, or starting a new job can induce anxiety in some individuals.
  - **Medical Conditions:**
    - Underlying **physical health issues**, including diabetes, heart disease, thyroid problems, or hormonal imbalances, can contribute to the onset or manifestation of anxiety symptoms.
- **Treating Anxiety Disorders:**
  - Treatment decisions are based on the severity, persistence, and impact of symptoms, as well as patient preferences.
  - **Evidence-based interventions** include selective **serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs)** and **cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT)**.
  - Co-occurring depression requires separate consideration and specific treatment.
  - Treatment is usually continued for 9-12 months after symptom remission, gradually phased out as recommended.

## What Initiatives has the Government of India taken to Address Mental Health?

- **National Mental Health Program (NMHP):** The [National Mental Health Program \(NMHP\)](#) was adopted by the government in **1982** in response to the large number of mental disorders and shortage of mental health professionals.
  - **District Mental Health Programme (DMHP), 1996** was also launched to provide community mental health services at the primary health care level.
- **Mental Health Act:** As part of the [Mental Health Care Act 2017](#), every affected person has **access to mental healthcare and treatment from government institutions**.
  - It has significantly reduced the significance of [Section 309 IPC](#) and **attempts to commit suicide are punishable only as exceptions**.
- **Kiran Helpline:**
  - In 2020, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment launched a **24/7 toll-free helpline 'Kiran'** to provide mental health support.
- **Manodarpan Initiative:**
  - It aimed at providing **psychosocial support** to students, teachers, and family members during the [Covid-19 pandemic](#).
- **MANAS Mobile App:**
  - To **promote mental well-being across age groups**, the Government of India launched [MANAS \(Mental Health and Normalcy Augmentation System\)](#) in **2021**.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

**Q.** What does this quotation mean to you - "We can never obtain peace in the outer world until and unless we obtain peace within ourselves." - Dalai Lama (2021)

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