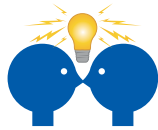




Diversity Matters



Ryan's Challenge



My name is Ryan and I have ADHD. I have a hard time having conversations with others because my thoughts jump around. I'm always thinking about random facts or stories that connect to what I'm hearing, which makes the actual conversation seem slow and boring. A lot of times I speak up because it is overwhelming not to share what my brain thinks. When I do share something I'm thinking, people usually look at me funny—probably because my thoughts don't make sense to them or connect with what they are thinking. It is just hard to shut things off in my mind—it's like doing homework while watching a loud television show and listening to music in an earbud all while trying to follow the conversation. It is really hard to focus on one thing at a time.

Question: Can you relate to how Ryan feels? Explain your answer. What are some ways you can show respect and compassion for someone with ADHD or another anxiety-related disorder?

What Is Anxiety?

Anxiety disorders are some of the most common mental disorders among children and teens. It is important to understand that there is a difference between feeling anxious and having an anxiety disorder. **Anxiety** is an emotion that includes tension, worried thoughts, and physical changes like increased blood pressure. It is normal to feel anxiety sometimes. Just as with stress, anxiety can help motivate and engage us if we don't have too much of it. Stress and anxiety are similar. Stress occurs as a response to our environment. We react to stressful situations and when stress is long-term it can affect our health. Anxiety is a feeling of fear and almost always includes a sense that something really bad is going to happen. A person can experience anxiety simply by thinking about something that they fear or worry about. The source of the anxiety is not always known or recognized, which can make things worse. When anxiety gets out of control, anxiety disorders can occur.

What Are Anxiety Disorders?

HEALTHY LIVING TIP

Try to express your feelings to others every day. Practicing expressing and communicating your emotions can help prevent anxiety disorders.

We all experience anxiety; it is a normal part of life. However, people with **anxiety disorders** frequently have intense, excessive, and persistent worry and fear about everyday situations. See table 7.1 for examples of common anxiety disorders. These feelings of anxiety and panic interfere with daily activities like going to school or hanging out with friends. The feelings are difficult to control, are out of proportion to the actual danger, and can last a long time. Symptoms may start during childhood or the teen years and continue into adulthood (figure 7.8).

TABLE 7.1 Common Anxiety Disorders

Disorder	Description
General anxiety disorder	Includes ongoing and excessive anxiety and worry about activities or events, even ordinary, routine things. The worry is out of proportion to the actual circumstance, is difficult to control, and affects how you feel physically. It often occurs along with other anxiety disorders or depression.
Panic attacks/panic disorder	Involves repeated episodes of sudden feelings of intense anxiety and fear or terror that reach a peak within minutes (panic attacks). You may have feelings of impending doom, shortness of breath, chest pain, or a rapid, fluttering, or pounding heart (heart palpitations). Having panic attacks may lead to worrying that they may happen again or avoiding situations in which they've occurred.
Social anxiety disorder	Fear and avoidance of social situations stemming from feelings of embarrassment, self-consciousness, and concern about being judged or viewed negatively by others. Social anxiety disorder leads to high levels of anxiety in most social environments.
Simple phobia	Major anxiety when you're exposed to a specific object or situation and a desire to avoid it. Phobias cause panic attacks in some people. Common simple phobias include flying, public speaking, spiders, and heights.
Separation anxiety	A childhood disorder where the anxiety a child feels when being separated from parents is excessive for the child's developmental level.
Selective mutism	A consistent failure of children to speak in certain situations, such as in school, even when they can speak in other situations, such as at home with close family members. This can interfere with school, work, and social functioning.

Getting Help for Anxiety Disorders

Anxiety disorders can be hard to manage. The same techniques you learn to manage your stress levels, or to control your emotions, can help you to manage your anxiety. People with anxiety disorders need professional help to manage their condition. Anxiety disorders can be very serious and interfere with normal life when left untreated. They can also lead to alcohol and substance addictions. Common techniques for managing anxiety-related disorders include therapy, medication, support groups, and self-care.



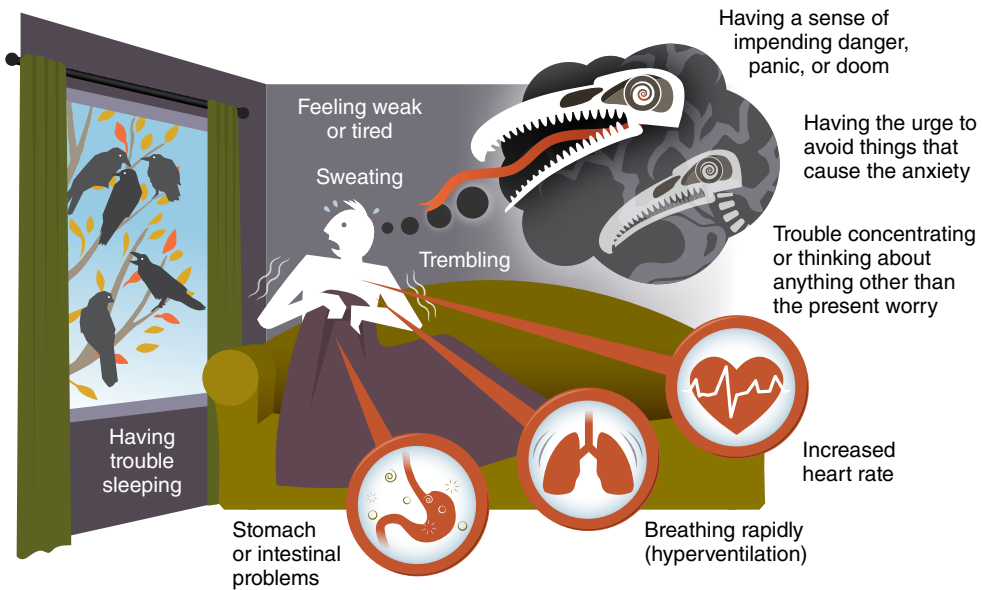


Figure 7.8 Common symptoms of anxiety disorders.

- **Therapy.** Therapy can help people deal with anxiety by helping them understand how to behave, think, and react to stressful situations and objects.
- **Medication.** Medication will not cure an anxiety disorder but it can help manage the symptoms.
- **Support Groups.** It can be therapeutic to share problems with other people. Support groups provide an opportunity to meet people with the same set of problems. Be careful joining an online support group because these environments encourage sharing of personal information and may encourage predators. If you are seeking a support group, consult a therapist for suggestions.
- **Self-Care.** Self-care for anxiety includes getting plenty of exercise. Exercise changes important hormone levels that can help with anxiety. Good quality sleep and a healthy diet are also important parts of self-care for anxiety.

Career Connection

RECREATIONAL THERAPIST

Recreational therapists organize, lead, and coordinate recreation-based treatment programs for people with disabilities, injuries, or illnesses. These therapists use a variety of modalities, including arts and crafts; drama, music, and dance; sports and outdoor recreation; and community outings to help maintain or improve a person's physical, social, and emotional well-being. Recreational therapists help people reduce depression, stress, and anxiety and build confidence after a disabling injury or illness. Therapists may also work with patients who need help developing social and coping skills. For example, a therapist may use a therapy dog to help patients manage their depression or anxiety. You need a bachelor's degree in recreation therapy or a closely related field in order to qualify to become a certified therapeutic recreation specialist (CTRS).