

# Awareness. Belonging. Connection.

Mental ill health is a growing problem in Australia – one that has been made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic. Looking after your mental health and wellbeing, and knowing how to support others, has never been more important.

Good mental health is when we can cope with the stressors of our daily lives, participate in loving relationships, contribute to our community, and work towards our goals. Everyone has mental health. And we can all benefit from looking after our own mental health and the mental health of our communities.

This World Mental Health Day – October 10 – the message is simple: “Look after your mental health, Australia.”

## **Anxiety**

**Anxiety is more than just feeling stressed or worried. While stress and anxious feelings are a common response to a situation where we feel under pressure, they usually pass once the stressful situation has passed, or ‘stressor’ is removed.**

Everyone feels anxious from time to time. When anxious feelings don't go away, happen without any particular reason or make it hard to cope with daily life it may be the sign of an anxiety condition.

Anxiety is the most common mental health condition in Australia

## What causes anxiety?

An anxiety condition isn't developed or caused by a single factor but a combination of things. A number of other factors play a role, including personality factors, difficult life experiences and physical health.

## Family history of mental health conditions

Some people who experience anxiety conditions may have a genetic predisposition towards anxiety and these conditions can sometimes run in a family. However, having a parent or close relative experience anxiety or other mental health condition doesn't mean you will automatically develop anxiety.

## Personality factors

Research suggests that people with certain personality traits are more likely to have anxiety. For example, children who are perfectionists, easily flustered, timid, inhibited, lack self-esteem or want to control everything, sometimes develop anxiety during childhood, adolescence or as adults.

## Ongoing stressful events

Anxiety conditions may develop because of one or more stressful life events. Common triggers include:

- work stress or job change
- change in living arrangements
- pregnancy and giving birth
- family and relationship problems
- major emotional shock following a stressful or traumatic event
- verbal, sexual, physical or emotional abuse or trauma
- death or loss of a loved one.

## **Physical health problems**

Chronic physical illness can also contribute to anxiety conditions or impact on the treatment of either the anxiety or the physical illness itself. Common chronic conditions associated with anxiety conditions include:

- diabetes
- asthma
- hypertension and heart disease

Some physical conditions can mimic anxiety conditions, like an overactive thyroid. It can be useful to see a doctor and be assessed to determine whether there may be a medical cause for your feelings of anxiety.

## **Other mental health conditions**

While some people may experience an anxiety condition on its own, others may experience multiple anxiety conditions, or other mental health conditions. Depression and anxiety conditions often occur together. It's important to check for and get assistance for all these conditions at the same time.

## **Substance use**

Some people who experience anxiety may use alcohol or other drugs to help them manage their condition. In some cases, this may lead to people developing a substance use problem along with their anxiety condition. Alcohol and substance use can aggravate anxiety conditions particularly as the effects of the substance wear off. It's important to check for and get assistance for any substance use conditions at the same time.

## Remember ...

Everyone's different and it's often a combination of factors that can contribute to developing an anxiety condition. It's important to remember that you can't always identify the cause of anxiety or change difficult circumstances. The most important thing is to recognise the signs and symptoms and seek advice and support.

Reference: Beyond Blue.

If you feel Anxiety is affecting your ability to enjoy life and you want to talk about it, contact:

**Louise Oswald Mental Health Nurse, Omeo District Health 51590100**

