

Anxiety

Fear is a normal and healthy feeling in response to danger. If you had to run from a lion to save your life the experience of fear would prepare your body to flee from the dangerous situation and therefore to safety. Fear becomes anxiety when fearful emotions are experienced despite a lack of any danger. When anxiety is experienced, the body reacts as though there is real danger. These cognitive, emotional and physiological responses can be extremely distressing and may limit one's capacity to live a full and happy life.

Symptoms of anxiety may include:

- Excessive worry
- A feeling of uneasiness or restlessness
- Inability to think clearly
- A rapid heart beat
- Stomach pains
- Excessive sweating
- Dry mouth

If you are experiencing anxiety it may be helpful to:

- Listen carefully to what your anxiety is telling you. You may in fact have a valid reason to be anxious and may need to make some changes in your life to reduce this anxiety.
- Learn as much about anxiety as possible. The more you know about anxiety the greater the chance you have of managing or even conquering the anxiety.
- Try to confront rather than avoid any distressing memories you may have. The more you avoid something, the more fear evoking it becomes. You may find it helpful to consult a counsellor if you have difficulty with this process.
- Learn which situations, thoughts, memories or experiences trigger your anxiety and learn strategies to manage these triggers. If you are able to identify the times when your anxiety is likely to be present you can then take active steps to calm yourself before anxiety symptoms start. This will facilitate your body's capacity to recognize that there is in fact no danger, which can lead to a reduction in level of anxiety.

- Learn to challenge and settle your thoughts and beliefs when you become anxious. Some self-talk can help you to recognize when your feelings of anxiety are unfounded and this can help you to feel less anxious.
- Learn what you can do to calm yourself when you do become anxious. E.g. Go for a walk, have a bath, call a friend, do some gardening, write down your worries or go for a swim.
- If your life is overcommitted or you have too many responsibilities, do what you can to create more time for yourself. Learn to say 'no'.
- Identify and engage in activities that help you feel calm and relaxed.

Please feel free to contact Life Supports on 1300 735 030 if you would like to discuss your situation with a professional counsellor. You can find more information about Life Supports services by visiting www.lifesupports.com.au.