

A communication periodical for our clients, staff & the community at large

The Chronicle

A Paterson Counseling Center Newsletter

Special points of interest:

- CARF Surveyor Complete Review of the Center
- PCC Takes Steps To Ensure CARF Momentum Continues Beyond Survey
- Counselors Review QPA Process For Process Improvement
- Community Satisfaction Survey Reveals Positive Interaction with Staff

Managing Anxiety Attacks

The discomfort and fear associated with anxiety attacks have given them quite a bad reputation. Not many people actually know what causes anxiety attacks, and this very ignorance makes people live in constant fear of suffering from such attacks, in turn making them more vulnerable to severe anxiety. Before we move on to see what triggers anxiety attacks, let's try to understand what is an anxiety attack and what happens when a person suffers from it.



What is an Anxiety Attack?

Anxiety attacks, often referred to as 'panic attacks' in medical terminology, are episodes of intense panic or fear which occur without any sort of warning. On an average, the duration of these episodes of panic attacks range between a few seconds to about half an hour, with anxiety symptoms reaching its peak in a span of 10 minutes or so. The distressful condition to which the person is subjected to for this short span of time can turn out to be a frightening and uncomfortable experience. A person suffering from anxiety attack is likely to feel as if he is suffering from a heart attack or nervous breakdown. Some of the most common anxiety attack symptoms include increased heartbeat, profuse sweating, feeling numb, weakness in knees, fear of dying, etc.

What Causes Anxiety Attacks?

It is very difficult to determine the exact causes of anxiety attacks, as they tend to differ from person to person. An individual is likely to suffer from anxiety attacks when he doesn't know how to react to a certain situation, such as being stuck in an elevator, making a presentation, performing on stage, etc. In fact, fear is one of the most prominent trigger factor when it comes to anxiety attacks in children. Similarly, a person becomes more vulnerable to such panic attacks when an important occurrence, such as losing a job or divorce, alters the course of life. Major incidents, such as death in the family or heavy financial loss, can also act as trigger factors for such attacks. Anxiety attacks are also common in people suffering from psychological disorders, such as obsessive compulsive disorder and post traumatic stress disorder.

Other than the psychological causes mentioned above, some physical factors also act as anxiety attack triggers. Antidepressants and other prescribed medication which can interfere with normal functioning of the brain can also trigger panic attacks in some people. At times, anxiety attack episodes are observed as one of the withdrawal symptoms of substance abuse. That's not quite surprising as people are so involved in their addiction that they just can't visualize life without these substances. There also exist some medical con-

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Managing Anxiety Attacks (continued)

ditions, such as catecholaminergic polymorphic ventricular tachycardia (CPVT) and Long QT syndrome, which can cause anxiety attacks in individuals. Similarly anxiety attacks while sleeping are attributed to conditions such as hyperthyroidism and Vitamin B deficiency. Even some sleep disorders, such as sleep apnea and pavor nocturnus, can trigger anxiety attacks at night.

In fact, anxiety is considered to be a symptom for these medical conditions, and a person experiencing anxiety attacks should also get himself diagnosed for these ailments. Some people are more vulnerable to anxiety attacks than others, and tend to panic on very small occurrences in life. It is very difficult to ascertain what causes anxiety attacks in such people. Even though panic attack is considered to be a hereditary problem, individuals with no family history of anxiety disorders can also suffer from the same.

What to do During an Anxiety Attack?

As we mentioned earlier, anxiety attacks come all of sudden and thus you have a very short time to react. Controlled breathing and distraction can help ease the situation, thus giving you enough time to ask for help by calling emergency services. If you are prone to anxiety attacks, you can carry a paper bag with you. Breathing into this paper bag is one of the most effective short term treatment method for anxiety attack relief. On the other hand, if you are wondering how to stop anxiety attacks once and for all, the answer is by resorting to various psychological therapies and medication. In fact, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is considered to be the best among various anxiety cures.

That was brief information about what causes anxiety attacks, which covered various factors that have a tendency to trigger such attacks. Taking into consideration the seriousness of this issue, it's more than obvious that understanding how to deal with anxiety attacks can turn out to be a boon in itself. Source buzzle.com

Nicotine Addiction

Nicotine is one of the main components of tobacco smoke and it acts as a stimulant for humans, making nicotine addiction one of the most difficult addictions to break. Smoking tobacco has been prevalent since time immemorial and is socially acceptable. There are several factors that contribute to nicotine addiction, ranging from genetic make up to societal influence. Nicotine from inhaled tobacco is known to be the major cause of heart attack and lung cancer. The human body is a strong and complex mechanism, it adapts very quickly. When people smoke, the body builds a tolerance to nicotine and allows them to smoke more without reacting negatively. This is one of the main contributors for the addiction to develop over a period.

Facts about Nicotine

Nicotine is an alkaloid and an average cigarette yields about 1mg of absorbed nicotine. Nicotine in the form of smoke passes through the blood-brain barrier getting the brain to release dopamine. When dopamine is released it gives a feeling of pleasure and thus an addictive association is formed. Whenever people smoke, the neurotransmitters in the brain react secreting dopamine, making the smoker feel alert and calm.

As people smoke, the body adjusts to the high levels of nicotine intake and certain chemical changes occur inside the brain. Once this starts happening, the brain needs nicotine to complete its circuit and dependency develops. Smokers will then have to inhale nicotine in regular intervals or in excess amounts in order for the brain to complete its circuit. The effects of nicotine are psychological as well as physiological.

Some of the other facts about nicotine are that it combines with different neurotransmitters in the brain causing effects like pleasure, mood change, appetite suppression, etc. It is responsible for stimulating neurotransmitters like dopamine, acetylcholine, serotonin, etc. Psychological dependence is one of the main reasons why people continue smoking. They smoke for stimulation, relaxation, to reduce stress, handle pressure, but most of the time, it's just craving and to avoid nicotine withdrawal symptoms.

Other facts about nicotine state that it causes short term increase in blood pressure and heart rate and also causes the arteries to narrow. Other chemicals in cigarette smoke may damage the arteries causing fats to deposit on the walls a condition which might lead to a heart attack. One of the other nicotine addiction facts is that it can also lead to lung cancer. Source: buzzle.com