



Three Types of Anxiety:

- 1) real anxiety - experienced under real threat eg natural disasters, illness, loss, etc. Physiological reactions panic and anger / aggression or escape / avoidance (Fight or Flight).
- 2) neurotic anxiety - produced from experiencing unresolved psychological conflicts, especially if there are insufficient defense mechanisms.
- 3) existential anxiety - a general human experience as a living creature. The separation from nature (the mother), may have offered us more freedom but it has also removed the security that derives from the contact with her. For Kierkegaard, existential anxiety is the "dizziness of freedom."

Generalized anxiety

Generalized anxiety is characterized by a high level of stress that a) is not justified by the facts and b) does not refer to anything specific. The stress is prolonged, indefinite and is able to disturb significantly the life of the individual. Sometimes it is concealed behind a facade of security and confidence.

Phobias

In phobias anxiety is associated with specific objects and/or situations. Eg:

Agoraphobia: fear of crossing a street, an empty square, or an empty room. Fear of staying in small or confined spaces e.g. elevator (claustrophobia).

Social phobia: obvious intense anxiety before or during public appearances, examinations etc. The individual is afraid of failure and/or of blushing (erythrophobia) and avoids being exposed to such situations.

Specific Phobias: Any of the stimuli in the environment may become the subject of specific phobias eg anxiety about height, depth, extreme weather, the visit to the doctor. There is also stress associated with transport (eg ship, aircraft), with various objects (eg knives) or harmless animals.



Panic Attacks/Cardiophobia

Without the existence of any basic organic disease, acute anxiety is manifested in the form of an episode/fit and the person is overwhelmed with a fear of imminent heart attack and death. It usually occurs in young adults. In a state of hyper-stimulation the person is panicked and asks for help. The duration of the episode is between 15'-2 hours. When help arrives or expected, the stimulation and anxiety subsides.

Manifestations during an episode

- In some cases it is preceded by nausea, vertigo, inner restlessness, slight feeling of anxiety in the heart.
- The episode begins suddenly
- Intense palpitations
- Slight rise in blood pressure
- Intense and choking heaviness in the heart
- Respiratory distress (feeling of lack of air)
- Sweating
- Dizziness and feeling of complete weakness (but not loss of consciousness)

In between episodes

- Continuous monitoring of cardiac function, the person is convinced that he/she suffers from a serious heart disease
- Hypersensitivity to minor physical symptoms and functions
- Excessive caution and self-care
- Avoidance – the person avoids situations of anxiety and arousal that can lead to an episode
- Difficulty sleeping because of fear that the panic will attack during sleep
- Avoids being in places with lots of people (the panic attacks can coexist with agoraphobia and claustrophobia)
- Tries not to be left alone

(Tolle & Windgassen, 2005. *Psychiatry*)

