

# Mental Disorders in Primary Care

## Anxiety

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### Common symptoms

#### Psychological

- ➔ Tension
- ➔ Worry
- ➔ Panic
- ➔ Feelings of unreality

- ➔ Fear of going crazy
- ➔ Fear of dying
- ➔ Fear of losing control

#### Physical

- ➔ Trembling
- ➔ Sweating
- ➔ Heart pounding
- ➔ Light headedness
- ➔ Dizziness

- ➔ Muscle tension
- ➔ Nausea
- ➔ Breathlessness
- ➔ Numbness
- ➔ Stomach pains
- ➔ Tingling sensation



### Anxiety disorders are common and treatable

Anxiety **does not** mean weakness

Anxiety **does not** mean losing the mind

Anxiety **does not** mean personality problems

Severe anxiety **does** mean a medical disorder which requires treatment

### Common forms of anxiety

#### Generalized anxiety disorder

- ➔ persistent /excessive worry
- and**
- ➔ physical symptoms

#### Panic disorder

- ➔ sudden intense fear
- and**
- ➔ physical symptoms
  - ➔ psychological symptoms

#### Social phobia

- Fear / avoidance of:
- ➔ social situations
  - ➔ fear of being criticised
- and**
- ➔ physical symptoms
  - ➔ psychological symptoms

#### Agoraphobia

- Fear / avoidance of:
- ➔ situations where escape is difficult
  - ➔ going to unfamiliar places alone
- and**
- ➔ physical symptoms
  - ➔ psychological symptoms

### What treatments can help?

**Both therapies are most often needed**

#### Support therapy for:

- ➔ slow breathing' relaxation
- ➔ exposure to feared situations
- ➔ realistic / positive thinking
- ➔ problem solving

#### Medication for:

- ➔ severe anxiety
- ➔ panic attacks

## About medication

### Short term

- use for severe anxiety
- can be addictive and ineffective when used in the long term

### Side effects

- are important to report

### Counselling

- (emotional support and problem solving)
- is always recommended with medication

### Ongoing review

- of medication use is recommended

## Slow breathing to reduce physical symptoms of anxiety

- Breathe in for 3 seconds and out for 3 seconds and pause for 3 seconds before breathing in again
- Practice 10 minutes morning or night (5 minutes is better than nothing)
- Use before and during situations that make you anxious
- Regularly check and slow down breathing throughout the day

## Changing attitudes and ways of thinking

"My chest is hurting and I can't breathe, I must be having a heart attack."

### Replace with

"I am having a panic attack, I should slow my breathing down and I will feel better."

"I hope they don't ask me a question, I won't know what to say."

### Replace with

"Whatever I say will be OK, I am not being judged. Others are not being judged, way should I be?"

"My partner has not called as planned. Something terrible must have happened"

### Replace with

"They might not have been able to get to a phone. It is very unlikely that something terrible has happened."

## Exposure to overcome anxiety and avoidance

**Easy stage** →  
Going to walk alone

**Moderate stage** →  
Lunch with a friend

**Hard stage**  
Shopping with a friend

- Use slow breathing to control anxiety
- Do not move to the next stage until anxiety decreases to acceptable level



# **Anxiety**

**Anxiety is common and treatable**

# Anxiety

## Anxiety is common and treatable

An anxiety disorder *does not* mean that you are weak Or that you are losing your mind or that you have a personality problem. Severe anxiety is a disorder that *can be overcome* with treatment Effective treatments are available.

## What is anxiety?

The word 'anxiety' is used to describe the mental and physical response to fearful and threatening situations. This reaction may include trembling, choking, increased heart rate, sweating, feelings of unreality and so on. Anxiety is a normal response experienced by everyone in response to stress. Nearly being hit by a car, sitting for an exam or giving a public talk are all examples of situations in which lead most people to experience anxiety.

*You are likely to be suffering from an anxiety disorder if you have any of the following:*

- The anxiety reaction occurs frequently
- Your fears are out of proportion to the situation
- You start to avoid feared situations
- It interferes with your working, social or family life

## Different forms of anxiety

- 1 Generalized anxiety
- 2 Panic disorder
- 3 Social phobia
- 4 Agoraphobia

*Try to work out which the following descriptions best fit your situation.*

## Generalized anxiety disorder

Generalized anxiety is different from the other anxiety disorders. The experience of anxiety is not linked to specific situations or to a fear of having a panic attack. It is an ongoing general anxiety, tension and excessive worrying about normal events and the future. While worry is a feature of generalized anxiety, it is less common to experience the range of other psychological symptoms common to different forms of anxiety.

## **Panic disorder**

People who suffer from 'panic disorder' are likely to experience attacks of sudden and intense anxiety. These panic attacks cannot be associated with events occurring around a person. The person is generally free from anxiety in between attacks

*Common symptoms of panic disorders include:*

### **Psychological symptoms**

- fear of dying
- fear of going crazy
- feelings of unreality

### **Physical symptoms**

- tightness or pain in the chest
- shortness of breath
- choking sensation
- pounding heart
- trembling
- numbness/tingling sensation in fingers and feet

- light-headedness
- sweating
- hot and cold flushes
- nausea
- dizziness and light-headedness

Panic attacks are also common with the other anxiety disorders. However, those attacks are easier to predict because they mostly occur in response to the feared situation(s).

## **Social phobia**

The main feature of 'social phobia' is the fear of being the focus of attention or subject of criticism. People with this disorder may worry that they will do something silly or embarrassing in front of others. Social phobia is experienced in many different social situations.

*Commonly feared situations include:*

- speaking in front of others
- asking questions
- eating in front of others
- writing in front of others
- being the centre of attention
- social activities such as lunches, dinners, parties, marriages, religious gathering or festivals etc

## **Agoraphobia**

People who have agoraphobia experience psychological and physical anxiety and often panic attacks.

*The anxiety tends to occur in situations in which:*

- there is a risk of having a panic attack
- there is a sense of being trapped or being to unable to leave or escape
- it would not be easy to get help should the need arise
- the environment is different and unfamiliar

This anxiety leads to the avoidance many situations and can severely effect day-to-day life. In extreme cases people who suffer from agoraphobia find It difficult to leave their house.

*Examples of commonly feared or avoided situations are:*

- leaving home, travelling alone, crowds and public places

# What may trigger anxiety?

There are many possible triggers for anxiety. It often starts during periods of psychological or physical stress.

*Examples of psychological and physical stress include:*

## Psychological

- relationship break-ups
- severe arguments
- death of someone close
- loss of a job
- lack of sleep
- work pressure
- financial problems
- physical and sexual abuse

## Physical

- physical illness
- excessive use of alcohol
- domestic violence
- abuse of other drugs
- trauma

When people experience stress they have a natural tendency to breathe more quickly and deeply. There is also a tendency to worry more than usual. These two factors are commonly found in people who have an anxiety disorder. Often changing the way you breathe and reducing worry can be useful for managing anxiety.

## Breathing too quickly and deeply

It is surprising for people to learn that breathing too quickly and/or deeply (also known as hyperventilation) can bring on anxiety. Breathing too quickly lowers the amount of carbon dioxide in your lungs and by a complicated series of processes this causes physical symptoms of anxiety.

Other important things to note are:

- You can get physical anxiety by slightly over breathing for a long time.  
So, over breathing does not have to be obvious to you or to others.
- If you slightly over breathe, even a yawn or sigh can trigger a panic attack or physical symptoms of anxiety.

*Over breathing is a habit and it takes time to change.*

## Worry and negative thinking

Worry and unrealistic or negative thinking can be triggers of anxiety. People who get anxious sometimes think in ways that bring on the anxiety or make it worse.

*For example,*

- you can think of an unpleasant situation and then make it worse by dwelling on it
- you can spend a lot of time worrying about something that never happens anyway
- you can misinterpret the behaviors and thoughts of other people around you

# How to treat anxiety

The presence of anxiety does not necessarily signify a problem. It is a universal human emotion that appears as a normal response to certain situation. But anxiety is not always functional; sometimes it reaches disabling proportions. Furthermore, the anxious person may develop means of dealing with anxiety that are ineffective or counterproductive, such as *alcohol abuse*.

*The end point in the management of anxiety is not to remove all anxiety but rather to reduce it to manageable proportion.*

The best way to manage anxiety is through psychological help (counselling) and social support. With different psychological methods, it is possible to:

- control and stop panic attacks
- confront previously avoided and feared situations
- change negative and unrealistic thinking and reduce worry

Short term use of medication is recommended only when the anxiety experienced is very severe and counselling is also being used.

Another very effective way of reducing anxiety is physical exercise. Specifically, aerobic exercise is the form of exercise most consistently shown to reduce anxiety, and the duration should be of more than twenty minutes. Anxiety reduction achieved through aerobic exercise is similar to the reduction achieved through meditation or relaxation.

## How to overcome anxiety

### 1 Identify your symptoms of anxiety

Mark on the scale how much you experience each symptom. If you have other symptoms write them on another piece of paper and also *rate* them.

Symptom	<i>Symptom severity</i>			
	Not at all	Mild	Moderate	Severe
<b>Psychological</b>				
worry	_____	_____	_____	_____
fear of loss of control	_____	_____	_____	_____
fear of dying	_____	_____	_____	_____
fear of going crazy	_____	_____	_____	_____
feelings of unreality	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>Physical</b>				
Trembling	_____	_____	_____	_____
tightness / pain in the chest	_____	_____	_____	_____
shortness of breath / choking	_____	_____	_____	_____
sweating	_____	_____	_____	_____
pounding heart	_____	_____	_____	_____
hot and cold flushes	_____	_____	_____	_____
dizziness / light-headedness	_____	_____	_____	_____

### 2 Identify situations or places that you fear or avoid

It is common for people to experience anxiety in certain situations or places but not in others. It is also common for people to avoid those situations so that they can avoid the feeling of anxiety.

Do you fear or avoid anything? If you do, write them down and discuss them with your doctor and/or counsellor.

e.g., *speaking in front of a group*

.....

.....

.....

.....

Now add to the list below any other situations or places that you fear or avoid. Mark on the scale how much you fear or avoid each of the items. It will help you to overcome your anxiety if you repeat this task every time you think of a new situation or place that you fear or avoid. Discuss these with your doctor and/or counsellor.

Places/situations	Fear or avoidance			
	Not at all	Mild	Moderate	Severe
Eating or drinking with other people	_____	_____	_____	_____
Being watched or stared at	_____	_____	_____	_____
Talking to people in authority	_____	_____	_____	_____
Speaking in public	_____	_____	_____	_____
Being criticized	_____	_____	_____	_____
Asking for directions in the street	_____	_____	_____	_____
Ordering in a restaurant	_____	_____	_____	_____
Asking for help in a shop	_____	_____	_____	_____
Travelling alone or by bus	_____	_____	_____	_____
Walking alone on busy streets	_____	_____	_____	_____
Going Into crowded shops	_____	_____	_____	_____
Going to the movies	_____	_____	_____	_____
Taking elevators	_____	_____	_____	_____

### 3 Getting to know your breathing habits

You have learned so far that breathing too much or too quickly can bring on anxiety symptoms. The following exercises will help you learn more about your breathing habits. First check to see if you have any of the following symptoms of over breathing.

You breathe more than 10-12 breaths a minute at rest	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your chest sometimes feels over-expanded or tight	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>
You or others have noticed that you sigh or yawn quite a bit	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>
You often gasp or take deep breaths, particularly in situations that make you anxious	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>

*If you are marked “yes” to any of these, then it is likely that you over breathe.*

### 4 Slow breathing to reduce anxiety

When you get physical symptoms of anxiety, for example breathlessness, it feels like you are not breathing enough. The natural response is to breathe in more. However, if you do try to get more air by breathing in more, it just makes the problem worse. The best solution is to slow down your breathing even though you may feel that you should speed it up. Now we suggest a slow breathing technique to stop the unpleasant feelings of anxiety.

*Remember to breathe in using you, abdomen (not your chest) and through your nose.*

- breathe in slowly to the count of 3 seconds
- when you get to 3, slowly breathe out to the count of 3 seconds
- pause for 3 seconds before breathing in again
- continue this exercise for 5 minutes or so
  - practice twice a day for 10 minutes (5 minutes is better than nothing)
  - try to check and slow down your breathing during the day
  - use the slow breathing technique whenever you get anxious

*Remember the technique of slow breathing sounds very simple and it is very effective, but it will take practice to master the technique.*



## 5 Identify unrealistic negative thinking

When people are depressed they tend to think negatively about themselves, events and their future. Unrealistic and negative thinking can also trigger anxiety and slow down recovery.

Consider these two responses.

### *Disagreement with a colleague...*

#### **Person A**

She doesn't agree with me;  
she thinks what I said was stupid

I am a fool, I should not talk

I can not handle it;  
I am getting out of here

#### **Person B**

So we have a different point of view. That is OK

It was interesting to discuss our different ideas

If she has a problem, then too bad for her

### *Anxiety / panic*

### *Interested / stimulated*

## 6 Identify unrealistically negative thinking

Here are some more examples of other unrealistic thoughts or beliefs. Mark the statements that apply to you.

- when people look at me they are examining what I do
- if I get criticized it means that I am wrong
- if I don't agree with people they won't like me
- if I make a mistake that means that I am stupid
- to be a good person I have to be nice to everyone
- I am a bad person if I hurt someone
- if I show emotion it means that I am weak
- people will think that there is something wrong with me if they see that I am anxious
- the opinions of other people about me are very important
- I am afraid that I look or sound silly to other people
- I can tell that people will evaluate me negatively
- I have to be very careful about what I say in case I offend someone
- approval is very important to me
- being anxious is a sign of weakness
- when people see me behave like this they will talk badly of me to others

*Now if you have other unrealistic or negative beliefs write them below or use separate sheet of paper*

*e.g. If someone is late, I assume there has been an accident.*

.....  
.....  
.....

## 7 How do you change the way you think?

It is likely that you have been thinking in an unrealistic or a negative way for some now. **Remember, you can learn to think more realistically. It will take practice to change your ways but you can do it.**

**First**, ask yourself, is this belief that I have true? In order to do this, it may help to...

- consult someone outside the situation for their opinion
- ask yourself whether everyone would have the same belief in this situation
- ask yourself if the belief is true in every situation
- examine the other similar situations
- examine other explanations for the event occurring

**Second**, counter each unrealistic or negative thoughts with more realistic ones

- these should be opposite to the unrealistic belief
- they should be realistic statements
- there should be as many counters as possible

## 8 How do you change the way that you think?

Please read the following example and then try to create your own examples. Try to find solutions to them using the same method.

SITUATION: Anxious eating in a restaurant

### **Unreasonable negative thoughts:**

- I am sure they know that I am anxious and my fork is shaking
- They will think that I am strange
- They will think that I am a fool
- I hope they will not tell anyone
- I wish I could get out of here

*Resulting Feelings:* Panic

### **Reasonable positive thoughts:**

- It is unlikely that they have noticed my anxiety
- It is more noticeable to me than to them
- If they were to think anything they would probably think that I was shy
- Even if they did think that I was anxious they would not think badly of me
- I will try to stay focused on the meal and our conversation

*Resulting feelings:* Manageable anxiety

## 9 Exposing yourself to fearful situations

*Here are some general guidelines:*

- Build up slowly: start with easy tasks and build up to harder tasks
- Only move on to a harder task when you feel comfortable with the task you are working on
- Practise tasks regularly, once a day is better than twice a week
- Do not give in to set-backs
- Discuss your problems with your doctor and/or your counsellor
- Get someone to help and encourage you

*Specific guidelines:*

- Always stay in the situation until your anxiety level drops. If you leave the situation while your anxiety is high or when you are in a panic, you will experience relief. This will make your anxiety worse the next time you are confronted with a similar situation.
- Use slow breathing strategies to control physical anxiety
- Use the new 'rational thinking' strategies to replace unrealistic/negative thinking.

Here you will find some examples to help you work out your exposure plan.

### ***Example 1- Getting used to speaking and asking for assistance in front of others***

#### **With a friend**

- go to a shop and ask for an item that you wish to buy
- go to a flower shop and ask for special arrangement of flowers
- go to a clothes shop and try on different types of clothes
- ask for directions in the street
  - repeat tasks varying the Items that you ask for
  - vary the shops that you go to
  - repeat the activities on your own
  - repeat activities with an acquaintance

### ***Example 2- Eating in public***

#### **With a friend**

- go to a coffee shop and order coffee
- have morning tea with a friend
- have a sandwich in a coffee shop with a friend
- have dinner in restaurant with a friend
  - vary the time of day that you go
  - go into quiet and then busy shops/cafes
  - go to informal and formal places
  - repeat activities on your own

### ***Example 3- Feeling comfortable with groups of people***

- organize and go to a social event with a group of friends
- organize and go to a social event with a group of friends and some acquaintances
- organize and go to a social event with acquaintances only
- organize and go to a social event with work colleagues
  - vary the social events
  - vary the time of the day
  - vary the formality of the events

### **Example 4 – Conversation with people**

- Say what you think rather than going along with what others think
  - Say 'No, I think...'
  - Say 'No, I would prefer to...'
    - repeat activities with friends
    - repeat activities with acquaintances
    - repeat activities with people with whom you feel comfortable

## **Keep a record of progress**

As part of treatment It is useful to keep a record of your anxiety levels in difficult situations. You can see more clearly how the breathing exercises, thinking techniques, and exposure exercises have helped you. We have developed three record forms for you to use.

**1 The symptom severity form:** We recommend you use this every week to monitor your symptoms of anxiety.

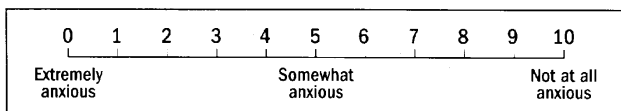
**2 The exposure form:** We recommend that you use this every week to monitor your symptoms of anxiety for situations in which you have carried out exposure exercises.

**3 Personal progress chart:** We recommend that each week you mark your overall rating on the graph provided.

## Symptom severity form anssd overall rating of how you feel

Week \_\_\_\_\_

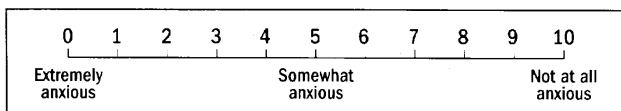
Symptom	Severity			
	<i>not at all</i>	<i>mild</i>	<i>moderate</i>	<i>severe</i>
<b>Psychological</b>				
➤ fear of loss of control	_____	_____	_____	_____
➤ fear of dying	_____	_____	_____	_____
➤ fear of going mad	_____	_____	_____	_____
➤ feelings of unreality	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>Physical</b>				
➤ trembling	_____	_____	_____	_____
➤ tightness / pain in the chest	_____	_____	_____	_____
➤ shortness of breath / choking	_____	_____	_____	_____
➤ pounding heart	_____	_____	_____	_____
➤ sweating	_____	_____	_____	_____
➤ hot and cold flushes	_____	_____	_____	_____
➤ nausea	_____	_____	_____	_____
➤ dizziness / light-headedness	_____	_____	_____	_____
➤ numbness / tingling	_____	_____	_____	_____



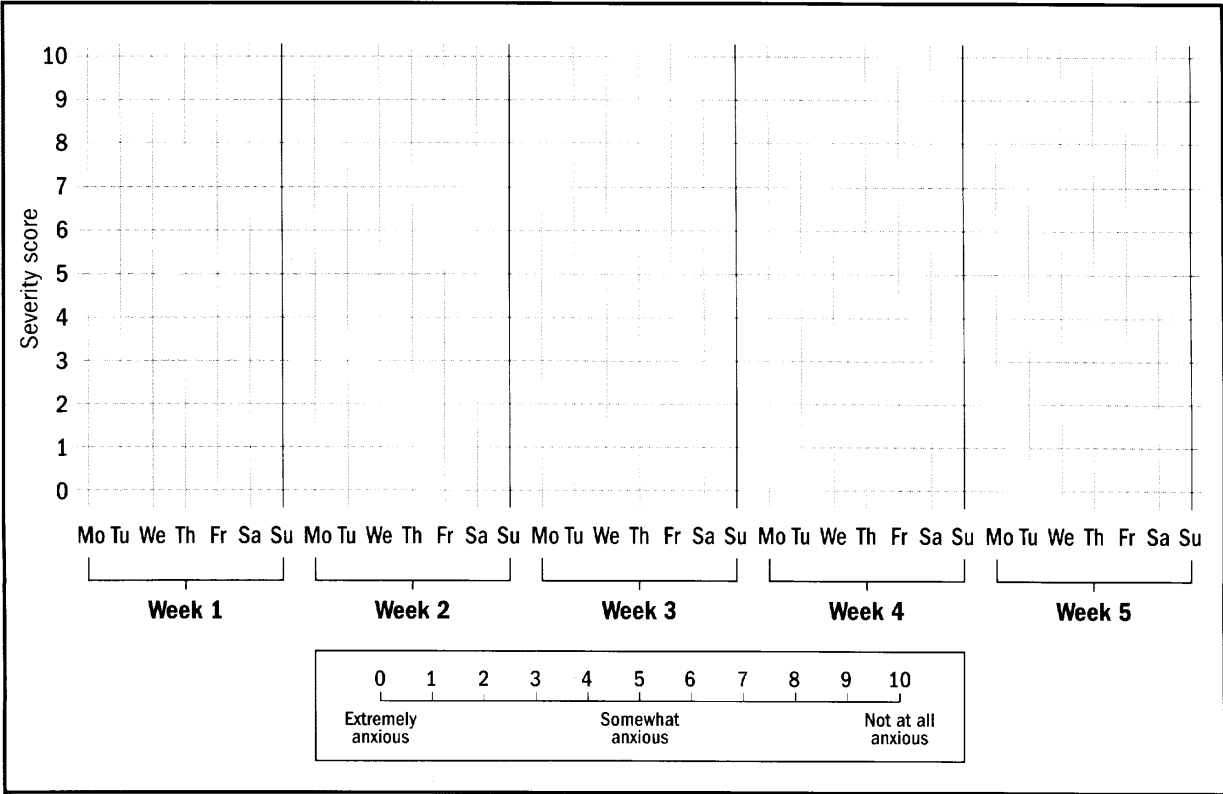
## Exposure form and overall rating of how you feel

*SITUATION: Example: getting used to speaking & asking for assistance*

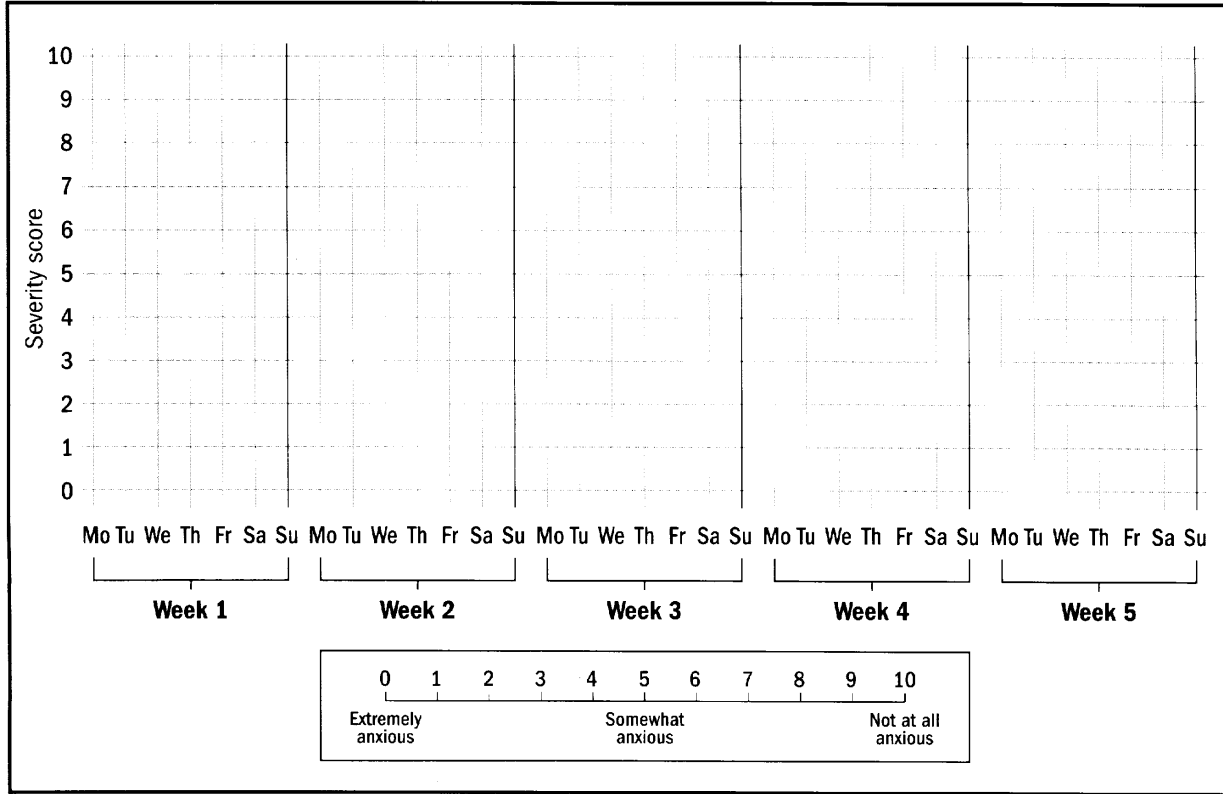
Week	Specific task	Fear or avoidance severity			
		<i>not at all</i>	<i>mild</i>	<i>moderate</i>	<i>severe</i>
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____



**Personal progress chart**



**Personal progress chart**



This page will be filled by local centers or attending Primary Care Providers

**Notes**

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**Medication information**

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**Self-help groups**

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**Counselors**

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**Doctors**

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**Help lines**

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**Suggested reading**

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**Other materials**

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# ICD-10 PC: Questionnaire for

# Anxiety

During the *last month* have you had any of the following complaints most of the time? If yes, please check or mark the relevant box.

- I. Have you been feeling tense or anxious?
- II. Have you been worrying a lot about things?

## If YES to any of the above, continue below

### 1. Have you experienced in the last month:

- ➔ Fear of dying?
- ➔ Fear of losing control?
- ➔ Pounding heart?
- ➔ Sweating?
- ➔ Trembling or shaking?
- ➔ Chest pain difficulty breathing?
- ➔ Nausea<sub>1</sub> feeling dizzy, lightheadedness or feeling faint?
- ➔ Numbness or tingling sensations?
- ➔ Feelings of unreality?
- ➔ Nausea?

### 2. Have you experienced these symptoms while:

- ➔ going to unfamiliar places
- ➔ travelling alone, e.g. train, car, plane
- ➔ crowds / confined places/ public places
- ➔ taking lifts elevators

### 3. Fear/anxiety in social situations?

- ➔ speaking in front of others
- ➔ social events
- ➔ eating in front of others
- ➔ worrying/tension/feelings of apprehension

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### I. During the *last month* have you been limited in one or more of the following areas most of the time:

- Self care: bathing, dressing, eating?
- Family relations: spouse, children, relatives?
- Going to work or school?
- Doing housework or household tasks?
- Social activities, seeing friends, hobbies?
- Remembering things?

### II. Because of these problems doing the *last month*:

How many days were you unable to fully carry out your usual daily activities? \_\_\_\_\_  
How many days did you spend in bed in order to rest? \_\_\_\_\_