

Overview

Most people experience anxiety as being based in fear. They encounter an event, situation or a memory of the same and often describe their response as “fight or flight,” the primary goal of which is to achieve safety. They may experience a variety of physical symptoms including shaking, sweaty palms, heart palpitations, dizziness, sweating and nausea. There are 11 types of anxiety disorders according to the DSM IV.

Origins of Anxiety

- Brain Chemistry
- Heredity
- Life Experiences

Brain Chemistry

Two of the primary neurotransmitters that affect thought and feeling are serotonin and dopamine. When these chemicals have an imbalance, one can feel depressed or anxious.

Scientific evidence tells us that anxiety-related problems such as stress, panic, and exaggerated fears are the result of an imbalance between the right and left hemispheres of the brain. Positron emission tomography or (PET) scans are being done to study this evidence.

Genetics

There is evidence that anxiety disorders run in families. If parents or other close relatives have an anxiety disorder, children are at higher risk of developing an anxiety disorder in the future. Being raised in a family where fear and anxiety are shown on a constant day to day basis can affect a person in adulthood.

Life Experiences:

Researchers believe that the relationship between anxiety disorders and a life of abuse, violence, or poverty is grounds for further study, as these life experiences may affect an

individual's exposure to these disorders. Experts believe that anxiety is a learned behavior that can be unlearned. Events in childhood may lead to certain fears that, over time, develop into an anxiety disorder. They can be specific to one event or cumulative.

Caffeine, cocaine, and amphetamines can also exacerbate anxiety symptoms. It is a known fact that cocaine use over time can cause feelings of panic, and this terror often continues for years after the drug is stopped. Exhaustion and other stimulants, and even the side effects of certain medications can cause the symptoms of anxiety. Being taught to hold back negative feelings such as anger, or an excessive need for approval, can also be possible triggers.