

STEP BY STEP WITHOUT ANXIETY

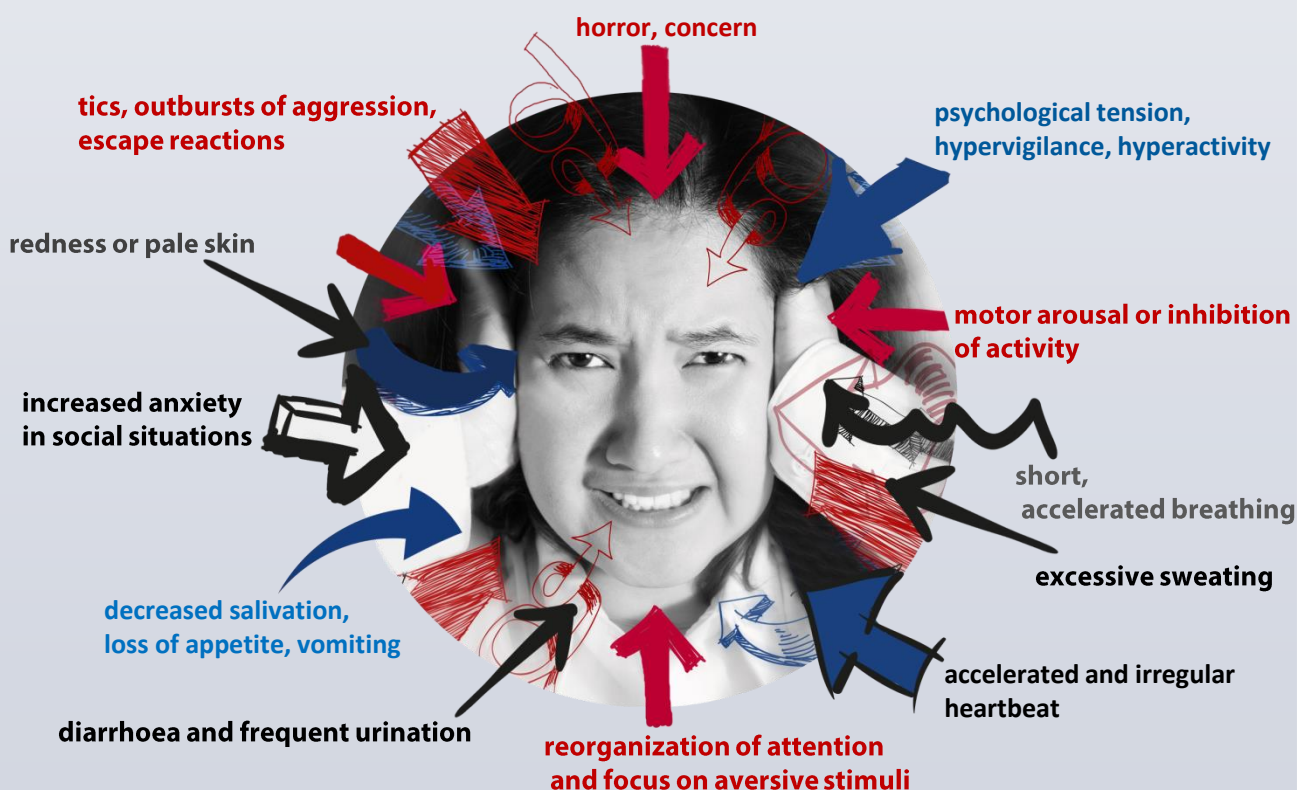
There are both similarities and differences between people. For example, watching people walking the streets when suddenly a storm breaks overhead and torrential rain starts to pour down, we notice that most people react the same way – they hastily run away and take shelter in a dry place.

At the same time we can observe clear differences between them. Some will move quickly, others much slower. People will differ in the place they choose to shelter and their reaction to the downpour: Some will be scared because of the storm, others angry that their plans have been thwarted, others amused by this unexpected adventure.



Although people's behaviour changes from situation to situation, we may also observe some stability and consistency in their reactions regardless of the nature of the event. One such feature, which significantly affects how people react to the world is **trait anxiety** – a tendency to experience state anxiety in response to an anticipated threat.

People with a high level of trait anxiety experience more intense degrees of state anxiety towards specific situations than others. They also experience anxiety towards a broader range of situations or objects than most people. Therefore trait anxiety describes a personality characteristic rather than a temporary feeling.





The Prof looks like he's in a foul mood.
He's going to give me a really hard time.

High trait anxiety
people...
view new or
ambiguous
situations as more
threatening.

The Prof is a good guy,
I'm pretty sure it'll be OK.

They're definitely going to ask
about the stuff I don't know
I'm going to look so stupid.

High trait anxiety
people...
expect more
harm than good
in their future.

Something I revised is bound
to come up, it'll give me a chance to
show them what I know.

I can't do this.
I can't remember a thing,
I can't cope.

High trait anxiety
people...
don't believe
in their own
abilities.

I'll manage somehow.
It'll be fine no matter
what the result.

*High trait anxiety people... often feel tension, anxiety and even terror or panic,
accompanied by physiological arousal.*

*When anxiety exceeds their coping abilities problems such as anxiety disorders,
social phobias, depression or somatic diseases may appear.*

*However trait anxiety is also often an acquired feature – one can get rid of it or at
least significantly reduce its level.*

How you can help yourself?

- Learn as much as possible about ways that help you to relax – find your own methods for relaxation.
- When facing new challenges try to think about yourself as your best friend would – imagine that s/he is always around watching out for you and can help you cope.
- When judging yourself, don't just concentrate on your weaknesses – also remind yourself of your strengths and resources.
- Try to evaluate situations realistically – rather than concentrating on the negative consequences try to assess how probable is that these harmful consequences will occur and then focus on what you can do.
- Do not give up on your dreams – try instead to set realistic expectations and approach them step by step – recognise all your successes and what you've accomplished so far.
- Continue to build on your self-esteem and challenge negative thoughts – such as *"unfavourable comparisons"* (the tendency to draw inadequate and inferior comparisons of yourself to others), *"catastrophizing"* (focusing on horrible and awful predictions), *"personalizing"* (seeing yourself as more involved in negative events than you really were/are) or *"overgeneralizing"* (the belief that negative experiences are applicable to all aspects of your life). See leaflets on self-esteem on the University Counselling Services webpage.

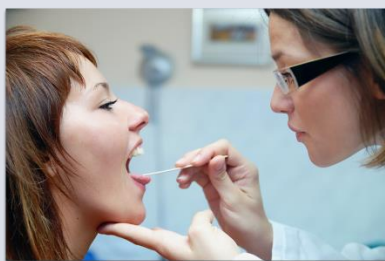
When to seek help?

- If despite trying the ideas above, the anxiety problems do not start to improve.
- If your fears or states of anxiety are persistent and difficult to control.
- If your fears make you avoid important activities and new challenges.
- If your fears prevent you from living a normal life and being happy.

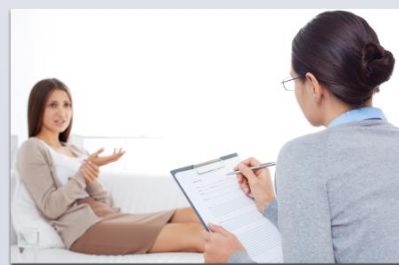
Where to seek help?



Speak to a trusted person:
close friend, family member
or tutor



Talk to your GP



Contact the University
Counselling Service
where counsellors can help
you understand and deal
with your fears or anxiety
www.ucs.wum.edu.pl

Sources: Spielberger, C. D. & Reheiser, E. C. (2009). Assessment of emotions: Anxiety, anger, depression, and curiosity. *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-being*, 1, 271-302.