

Causes of Anxiety

Anxiety problems can be caused by a variety of factors, and in most instances, several factors contribute to the development and maintenance of an anxiety problem. A person's genetics, life experience, and current environment all seem to contribute to the development of anxiety disorders. Some of the most common factors are:

Family History/Genetics

Anxiety disorders often 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. Researchers are identifying specific genes that play a role in the development of anxiety disorders. These genes can be passed down from one generation to the next.

Role Models

Being raised in a family that shows fear and anxiety on a daily basis can affect a person in adulthood. Children learn how to behave, in part, by watching their parents and other adults. Children learn by modeling or copying the adults' behaviors and assume that the ways that their trusted adults respond to situations are the "normal" and correct ways of responding.

Brain Chemistry

Chemical messengers in the brain called neurotransmitters help to regulate thoughts and feelings. If the neurotransmitters become unbalanced or do not work correctly, anxiety symptoms can result.

Traumatic Events

Traumatic events can trigger anxiety disorders in individuals at higher risk due to biological (genetic) and environmental (family and stress) factors. A traumatic event such as witnessing death or engaging in battle can lead to feelings of anxiety which won't go away easily. If the individual is not able to resolve the anxiety surrounding the event, the anxiety can grow and contribute to other anxious thoughts and behaviors.





What makes anxiety worse?

Many life circumstances and situations make anxiety worse. Recognizing that there are things in your life that are making anxiety worse is an important first step toward making changes to reduce the anxiety.

Stress

Stress can make anxiety worse by having a negative effect on the body, on thoughts and beliefs, and on emotions.

Relationship/Family stress

Relationships with significant others and family members can be a great source of support. When these relationships become strained, which frequently happens following a deployment, anxiety levels can increase. If relationships with significant others and family members are strained, the social support gained from those relationships will be affected, which can increase anxiety levels.

Job stress

Returning from a deployment often means returning to a different kind of work or starting a new job. These changes can be very stressful and can make anxiety worse.

Financial stress

Stress related to money is a huge source of anxiety. It often takes some time following a deployment to get finances in order.

Caffeine and other stimulants

Stimulants such as caffeine found in coffee, tea, soda, energy drinks, chocolate, and some over-the-counter medications can aggravate anxiety. Also, nicotine in cigarettes or smokeless tobacco can increase anxiety. If you use caffeine and/or nicotine regularly, you might not even realize the impact that those substances may have on your level of anxiety. Cutting back on caffeine or going “cold turkey” can cause more anxiety and physical symptoms like headaches at first, but after the initial withdrawal symptoms, anxiety will be less.

