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[Home](#) > Anxiety Is a Normal Reaction

## Anxiety Is a Normal Reaction

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The first thing to remember is that anxiety is not about what happens right now, it's about what might happen in the future. People who experience this condition are usually concerned about possible negative outcomes. Worrying keeps us on guard by making us aware of possible dangers. From this point of view, anxiety is actually useful because it keeps us out of harm's way (physically and mentally). But where do we draw the line? How can we tell the difference between healthy and unhealthy anxiety? In this article, we're going to 'bring down' some popular misconceptions by clarifying what it truly means to suffer from anxiety.

Each and every person on this planet has experienced anxiety, at least a couple of times. We worry about bills, jobs, deadlines and pretty much anything related to our future. But is this a problem?

The banner features the Explorable logo and the text "Quiz Time!". Below this, there are three quiz thumbnails:

- Thumbnail 1: A pair of red roller skates on a wooden deck. Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2
- Thumbnail 2: A fan of colorful pencils. Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2
- Thumbnail 3: A Ferris wheel at sunset. Quiz: Flags in Europe

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## A Simple Definition for Anxiety

Instead of giving you a textbook definition for anxiety, we're going to focus on how people usually describe this condition. Anxiety is usually characterized as 'vague', 'unspecific', 'troubling', 'worrisome' and 'distressing'. You feel like something's wrong but you don't exactly know how to describe that feeling. Basically, anxiety is a nonspecific fear, completely unrelated to external factors or circumstances.

## **Anxiety Often Doesn't Work Alone**

Whether it manifests as an isolated symptom or accompanied by other distressing symptoms, anxiety is the key component in many mental illnesses. Most people describe anxiety as a diffused fear. Since there isn't a well-defined object, you might experience a continuous tension. You constantly feel threatened, nervous and oftentimes, you don't even realize what exactly scares you that much.

## **Healthy vs Unhealthy Anxiety**

As we have previously discussed, everybody worries about something. In fact, this is exactly what keeps our emotions in check. Constructive worrying helps us cope with difficult and potentially dangerous situations, in an adequate manner. For instance, if the cabbie drives on the wrong side of the road it's absolutely normal to feel scared because he might cause an accident. In this scenario, anxiety becomes a normal, healthy response because from a rational and realistic point of view, it makes perfect sense.

## **How to Identify Unhealthy Anxiety?**

When a certain situation doesn't pose any real threat or the danger is too small to justify the intense reaction, it means that you're dealing with unhealthy anxiety.

## **How to Distinguish Between the Two?**

One way to separate healthy from unhealthy anxiety is by analyzing the consequences. When you feel like your wellbeing and social circles are affected, you're no longer dealing with healthy anxiety. Another important criteria is time. If the negative symptoms last for more than six months it usually means that your anxiety has become a real problem. In other words, anxiety becomes a problem when it exceeds a certain threshold, defined primarily on the basis of substantial changes in your happiness and wellbeing.

## **What Now?**

Fighting social anxiety is never easy which is why we have adopted a step-by-step approach. We'll start with psychoeducation which will cover the basics of social anxiety like: symptoms and explanations. Next, we'll focus on specific social contexts in which anxiety usually poses a problem. It's crucial that you identify and challenge negative thinking because that's exactly what triggers social anxiety. In order to make things easier, we've designed a set of useful applications that will accompany every stage of the healing process.

## **It's Up to You!**

Last but not least, you'll have to face your fears by exposing yourself to anxiety producing situations. It might sound scary now, but by the time you reach that step, you'll be more than ready. This is the main reason why we chose an inside-out approach. You start by making

some meaningful changes on the inside, which will then reflect on your outer self.

As long as you stay committed and follow our careful instructions, you'll have a real chance of gaining a better life!

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