

STRESS AND ANXIETY

A guide for LGBT people



LGBT
foundation

STRESS AND ANXIETY

Anxiety is one of the most commonly diagnosed mental health problems in the UK with around 5% of the population experiencing it at some point in their lifetime; this figure is significantly higher for people who are LGBTQ.

What is Stress and Anxiety?

We all experience stress from time to time; it can often help us through challenging situations, such as an interview or exams.

However, if you are under a large amount of stress for a period of time this can lead to being physically exhausted, run down and more prone to experience anxiety.

Here are some of the signs and symptoms of anxiety (tick if you feel like this).

Emotions or feelings

- Nervous, worried, frightened
- Feeling something dreadful is going to happen
- Tense, stressed, uptight, on edge, unsettled
- Unreal, strange, woozy, detached, panicky

Physical or bodily signs

- Heart pounds, races, skips a beat
- Chest feels tight or painful
- Tingling or numbness in toes or fingers
- Stomach churning or butterflies
- Having to go to the toilet
- Feeling jumpy or restless
- Tense muscles
- Body aching
- Sweating
- Breathing changes
- Dizzy, light headed
- Exhaustion, sleeplessness

Thoughts

- "I'm losing control"
- "I'm going to faint"
- "My legs are going to collapse"
- "I'm going to have a heart attack"
- "I'm going to make a fool of myself"
- "I can't cope"
- "I've got to get out"

Behaviour

- Pace up and down
- Start jobs and not finish
- Can't sit and relax
- On the go all of the time
- Talk quickly or more than usual
- Snappy and irritable behaviour
- Drink more alcohol
- Smoke more
- Eat more (or less)
- Avoid feared situation(s)

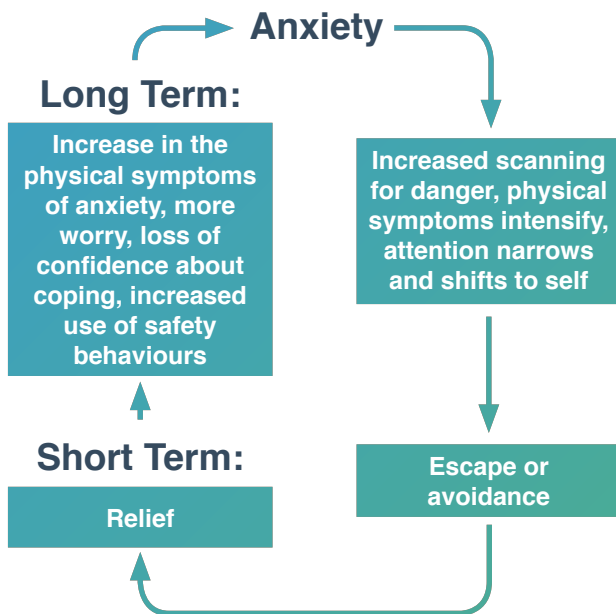
If you are regularly experiencing some or all of these symptoms, then it is likely that you are suffering from Stress and Anxiety.

CAUSES OF STRESS AND ANXIETY INCLUDE:

- ▶ Fear of being rejected/ discriminated against, when coming out as LGBTQ.
- ▶ Minority Stress - this is when members of stigmatised communities experience chronic stress because of persistent prejudice and discrimination. This will often lead to social anxiety.
- ▶ Internal and/or external Homophobia, Biphobia, Transphobia.
- ▶ Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) that lead you to feel anxious and unsafe.
- ▶ A series of stressful life events, such as bereavements, redundancy, divorce.
- ▶ Pressure at work, for example working long hours, feeling understaffed.
- ▶ Difficulties at home such financial, family or relationship problems.

WHAT MAINTAINS ANXIETY?

As the bodily symptoms of anxiety can be frightening, unusual and unpleasant, people often react by thinking that there is something physically wrong, or that something truly awful is going to happen. This in itself causes more symptoms, and so a cycle develops as you can see from the diagram below:



OVERCOMING STRESS AND ANXIETY

Whatever the cause of a person's stress and anxiety, there is something that can help.

Your first point of contact may be your GP, where they can offer you the appropriate advice as to the various treatments that are available.

Depending on the problem, some people may need medication or benefit from Stress Management techniques and Talking Therapy.

Guided Self-Help is an evidence based treatment recommended for anxiety, it is based on Cognitive and Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and delivered by trained Psychological Wellbeing Practitioners (PWP's).

The main aim of Guided Self-Help is to support you in learning how to make positive changes to your behaviour and thinking in order to feel better.

If you are offered this type of treatment, it means that you will receive a toolkit of coping strategies that will help you **become your own therapist**, so that you can manage your stress and anxiety effectively and prevent future setbacks.

This will be tailored to your individual needs and directed towards your own personal goals.

SEEKING SUPPORT

Contacting your GP can be the first step to gaining access to the support you would like, or to discuss your symptoms further.

LGBT Foundation offers a **free and confidential Talking Therapies Service**.

Contact us for more details:

E-mail: therapy@lgbt.foundation

Helpline: **0345 3 30 30 30**