

Anxiety Disorders in Today's Culture

Background:

- In a given year, anxiety disorders are prevalent in about 40 million Americans over eighteen years old or about eighteen percent of the population. (NIMH, 2007)
- Anxiety is a normal part of everyday life; it becomes a disorder when it lasts for six months or longer. (NIMH, 2007)
- Anxiety disorders usually coincide with other physical or mental disorders including substance and alcohol abuse. (NIMH, 2007)
- Fear and dread, excessive and irrational, are the leading symptoms of anxiety disorders. (NIMH, 2007)
- There are five different types of anxiety disorders: generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, phobias, post-traumatic stress disorder, and obsessive-compulsive disorder, more commonly referred to as OCD. (NIMH, 2007)
- Panic attacks are distinguished by unexpected spells of terror usually accompanied with an increase in heart rate, sweating, dizziness, and even fainting in some instances. During these sudden attacks, people could feel chills and numbness of fingers as well as nausea. Panic attacks cannot be predicted and can even occur in sleep. Panic disorders distress about six million Americans adults and are twice as frequent in women as in men. Panic attacks are an inherited trait passed on by parents. (NIMH, 2007)
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) is distinguished by ritualistic habits and upsetting thoughts that interfere with everyday life. These obsessions can range from germs to things like intruders and different irrational fears that lead to actions. These actions are never permanent solutions, but they do help these people have a temporary relief from the overwhelming anxiety. This disorder affects approximately 2.2 million Americans and can be associated with certain eating disorders, depression, or even other anxiety disorders. OCD can be treated with medication and sometimes the symptoms can be eased with psychotherapy. (NIMH, 2007)
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) develops after a person goes through a horrifying experience that involves some kind of physical harm. It can develop for the person who

went through the experience or a witness or loved one to the person being harmed. Most common cases of PTSD were from war veterans coming back from World War I. Since then, PTSD has been a common diagnosis for victims of rapes, muggings, kidnappings, car accidents, bombings, or even natural disasters. Symptoms usually start beginning within three months of the unpleasant incident and can occasionally surface years later. PTSD symptoms include nervousness and irritability, emotional numbness, loss of interest in things that they once took pleasure in, and even violence. Victims also tend to relive their experience during the day and have traumatic nightmares when asleep. PTSD distress approximately 7.7 million Americans adults, but it can arise in children as well. PTSD is more common in women than men.(NIMH, 2007)

- A phobia is an overwhelming fear of something that in reality poses little or no danger. The most common phobias usually include small spaces, heights, blood, or spiders. These fears are irrational and the people with phobias do realize this, but can't help themselves to stop their fear. Phobias affect approximately 19.2 million American adults and usually start to begin in childhood. Phobias tend to pass through families and the people with phobias usually try to stay away from the source of their fear. (NIMH, 2007)
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder is distinguished by a general worry or tension with nothing to explain it. They tend to expect disaster and are usually overly disturbed by health concerns, money, and work or family problems. Symptoms include an inability to relax for an extended period of time and trouble concentrating on simple tasks. This disorder affects approximately 6.8 million Americans and is most commonly diagnosed when a person spends, at minimum, six months worrying about daily problems. (NIMH, 2007)

Statement of the Problem

- Because treatments are so effective in helping people with mental disorders, scientists are trying to find a way to prevent these disorders, especially in children. (Healthy People, 2007)
- Anxiety disorders are common in not only the United States, but worldwide and Healthy People states that twenty-four percent of the world population will experience some kind of an anxiety disorder at some point in their life. (Healthy People, 2007)
- Healthy People states that anxiety disorders often coincide with substance abuse and depression and often include attempted or actual suicide. (Healthy People, 2007)

- Healthy People says that in 1997, thirty-eight percent of people with anxiety disorders were getting treated and their hope is that in 2010, fifty percent of people with anxiety disorders will be getting treatment. (Healthy People, 2007)
- Women are more likely than men, two or three times depending on the disorder, to get an anxiety disorder and Healthy People believes that this causes differences in treatment and the diagnosis of the disorder. (Healthy People, 2007)
- Healthy People believe that having an anxiety disorder and an addictive behavior such as alcohol or drug dependence will complicate the treatment for both of the problems. (Healthy People, 2007)

Epidemiologic Picture of the Problem

- About 40 million or 18.1% of people in the United States suffer from some form of anxiety disorder. (NIMH 2007)
- All forms of anxiety disorders have a risk of substance abuse and depression. (NIMH, 2007)
- Three out of every four people with an anxiety disorder have an episode by the time they reach 21.5 years old. (NIMH, 2007)
- Women are at least twice as likely to get an anxiety disorder as men. (NIMH, 2007)
- Most symptoms first appear in childhood or adolescence and continue on to adulthood. (NIMH, 2007)
- Panic disorders affect about 6 million American adults or 2.7 percent of the population of the United States. The median age for the onset of this disorder is 24. Usually, one in three of the people suffering from panic disorders develop agoraphobia. (NIMH, 2007)
- OCD affects 2.2 million American adults or 1.0 percent of the population of the United States. The median age for the onset of OCD is 19. (NIMH 2007)
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) affects 7.7 million American adults or 3.5 percent of the population of the United States. The median age for the onset of PTSD is 23. Approximately 19 percent of Vietnam veterans experience PTSD. (NIMH, 2007)

- Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) affects 6.8 million American adults or 3.1 percent of the population of the United States. The median age for the onset of GAD is 31. (NIMH, 2007)
- Phobias affect 19.2 million American adults or 8.7 percent of the population of the United States. The median age for the onset of phobias is seven years old. (NIMH, 2007)

Solutions to the Problem

- *Anxiety Disorders of America:*
 - This Web site offers support for people with anxiety disorders and also explains the degrees and kinds of anxiety. They also have a section for anxiety disorders plus the substance abuse. It also has self-tests for every kind of person, whether they are children or adults and also every kind of anxiety disorder. It also helps people with an anxiety problem find a therapist in their area to help them with their troubles. Their mission is to “promote the prevention, treatment, and cure of anxiety disorders and to improve the lives of the people who suffer from them.” (ADAA, 2007) It also has a section for support groups and stories of hope for people who are looking for help. There is also a message board so people with anxiety can talk to each other and gain help from each other. (ADAA, 2007) (<http://www.adaa.org/home.asp>)
- *Nemour’s Foundation:*
 - This Web site is about children’s health and explains who anxiety affects children. It explains what anxiety is and how to recognize the signs of an anxiety disorder in children. Since most anxiety disorders are first recognized or start in childhood, especially phobias, it’s a good idea to be able to recognize them. It also has a frequently asked question section about what to expect and what to deal with when a child has an anxiety disorder. They also explain how to help the child and how to teach the child to cope with the disorder and not to ignore it. (Sheslow, 2004) (<http://kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/feelings/anxiety.html>)
- *National Institute of Health:*
 - This Web site is an article that was written to explain what an anxiety disorder is and how to treat it. They explain that medication and therapy is usually the way to go for help. It explains the types of anxiety disorders and how to get help for those who are scared or who don’t know how to get help. They also address the “Why Me” feelings of anxiety disorders and how different people react differently in different situations. They use science to explain that anxiety disorders aren’t

limited to one kind of person and usually has something to do with the amygdala, which plays a role in fears. They also explain that it's easier to treat anxiety disorders if the disorder is diagnosed in childhood. (NIH, 2002)

(<http://www.nih.gov/news/WordonHealth/nov2002/anxietydisorders.htm>)

Internet Resources

- *HelpGuide.Org:*
 - This Web site allows people to understand anxiety disorders, whether they are looking for the types of anxiety disorders or how to treat them. They explain how to manage with an anxiety disorder and the risk factors of having an anxiety disorder. They also show in an easy to read way the psychological and physical symptoms of having an anxiety disorder and a panic attack. They also explain how psychiatrists diagnose anxiety disorders and the medications that might be helpful for certain symptoms. It also helps explain different types of therapy techniques to help people with anxiety find one that might be best for them. (Smith, 2007)
(http://www.helpguide.org/mental/anxiety_types_symptoms_treatment.htm)

- *University of Maryland Medical Center:*
 - This Web site gives a detailed description of all types of anxiety disorders and the symptoms that would be associated for each disorder. They also include the causes of anxiety disorders and the risk factors that might go along with a specific anxiety disorder. They do also include complications that might arise from having an anxiety disorder, especially for babies with separation anxiety. They also give details on the diagnosis of an anxiety disorder and the treatment for each of them, such as cognitive therapy or psychotherapy. They also explain other treatments such as neurostimulation and surgery methods. It also tells people which medications might be beneficial for a certain type of anxiety disorder. (UMM, 2006)
(http://www.umm.edu/patiented/articles/what_anxiety_disorders_000028_1.htm)

- *SAMHSA's National Health Information Center:*
 - This Web site helps to explain what anxiety disorders are defined by and the different types of anxiety disorders. It also explains in detail the symptoms, formal diagnoses, and the treatments for each different type of anxiety disorder. This Web site also gives people Web sites and addresses of other organizations where they can get more information about anxiety disorders. (SAMHSA, 2003)
(<http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/publications/allpubs/ken98-0045/default.asp>)

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Back to Betty C. Jung's Web site	http://www.bettycjung.net/
Back to Fact Sheet Directory	http://www.bettycjung.net/Pch202fs.htm