

# People Facing Anxiety may withdraw from Situations which have Provoked Anxiety in the Past.

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dread, terror, or even apprehension. In positive psychology, anxiety is described as the mental state that results from a difficult challenge for which the subject has insufficient coping skills.

## Description

Anxiety is an emotion characterized by an unpleasant state of inner turmoil and includes subjectively unpleasant feelings of dread over anticipated events. It is often accompanied by nervous behavior such as pacing back and forth, somatic complaints, and rumination. Anxiety is a feeling of uneasiness and worry, usually generalized and unfocused as an overreaction to a situation that is only subjectively seen as menacing. It is often accompanied by muscular tension, restlessness, fatigue, inability to catch one's breath, tightness in the abdominal region, and problems in concentration. Anxiety is closely related to fear, which is a response to a real or perceived immediate threat; anxiety involves the expectation of future threat including dread. Though anxiety is a normal human response, when excessive or persisting beyond developmentally appropriate periods it may be diagnosed as an anxiety disorder. There are multiple forms of anxiety disorder (such as Generalized Anxiety Disorder and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder) with specific clinical definitions. Part of the definition of an anxiety disorder, which distinguishes it from every day anxiety, is that it is persistent, typically lasting 6 months or more, although the criterion for duration is intended as a general guide with allowance for some degree of flexibility and is sometimes of shorter duration in children.

Anxiety is distinguished from fear, which is an appropriate cognitive and emotional response to a perceived threat. Anxiety is related to the specific behaviors of fight-or-flight responses, defensive behavior or escape. There is a false presumption that often circulates that anxiety only occurs in situations perceived as uncontrollable or unavoidable, but this is not always so. David Barlow defines anxiety as "a future-oriented mood state in which one is not ready or prepared to attempt to cope with upcoming negative events," and that it is a distinction between future and present dangers which divides anxiety and fear. Another description of anxiety is agony,

## Existential

The philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, in *The Concept of Anxiety* (1844), described anxiety or dread associated with the "dizziness of freedom" and suggested the possibility for positive resolution of anxiety through the self-conscious exercise of responsibility and choosing. In *Art and Artist* (1932), the psychologist Otto Rank wrote that the psychological trauma of birth was the pre-eminent human symbol of existential anxiety and encompasses the creative person's simultaneous fear of - and desire for - separation, individuation, and differentiation. The theologian Paul Tillich characterized existential anxiety as "the state in which a being is aware of its possible nonbeing" and he listed three categories for the nonbeing and resulting anxiety: ontic (fate and death), moral (guilt and condemnation), and spiritual (emptiness and meaninglessness). According to Tillich, the last of these three types of existential anxiety, i.e. spiritual anxiety, is predominant in modern times while the others were predominant in earlier periods. Tillich argues that this anxiety can be accepted as part of the human condition or it can be resisted but with negative consequences. In its pathological form, spiritual anxiety may tend to "drive the person toward the creation of certitude in systems of meaning which are supported by tradition and authority" even though such "undoubted certitude is not built on the rock of reality" According to Viktor Frankl, the author of *Man's Search for Meaning*, when a person is faced with extreme mortal dangers, the most basic of all human wishes is to find a meaning of life to combat the "trauma of nonbeing" as death is near.

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