



## Glossary Of Anxiety Disorder Terms

This glossary explains key terms related to anxiety disorders.

**agoraphobia** the fear of public places or open spaces; agoraphobics try to avoid being in situations from which they think escape would be difficult or help and safety are not readily available; this is often diagnosed in conjunction with panic disorder

**anti-depressants** medication that alleviates the symptoms of depression; they are also used to alleviate the symptoms of anxiety disorders

**anxiety** a sense of apprehension and fear often marked by physical symptoms (such as sweating, tension, and increased heart rate)

**anxiety disorders** a group of serious yet treatable health problems affecting one in 10 Americans; anxiety disorders are caused by a combination of biological and environmental factors

**anxiolytics** the medications that reduce the symptoms of anxiety

**behavior therapy** the treatment used to help patients substitute desirable responses and behavior patterns for undesirable ones

**cognitive therapy** a form of therapy stemming from the belief that emotional disorders are caused by irrational yet habitual forms of thinking; these patterns are viewed as behaviors that the therapist can try to help the patient change

**compulsion** repetitive behaviors or rituals that neutralize the anxiety caused by obsessive thoughts

**exposure therapy** a type of treatment that includes gradually bringing patients into contact with a feared object or situation; patients learn that the object or situation can be faced and that avoidance is unnecessary

**family therapy** the efforts aimed at helping a patient's family understand and cope with the patient's disorder and help in the patient's recovery

**generalized anxiety disorder (GAD)** an excessive or unrealistic worry that is unrelated to another illness and can last six months or more

**neurosis** a long-term disorder featuring anxiety and/or exaggerated behavior dedicated to avoiding anxiety; sufferers understand that the condition is abnormal

**obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)** a condition marked by persistent and recurring thoughts (obsessions) typically reflecting exaggerated anxiety or fears that have no basis in reality; sufferers often feel compelled to perform a ritual or routine to help relieve anxiety caused by their obsessions; sufferers typically realize the ritual or compulsion makes no sense yet feel powerless to stop

**panic attack** the abrupt onset of an episode of intense fear or discomfort, which peaks in approximately ten minutes, and includes a variety of symptoms

**panic disorder** a condition marked by episodes of immediate and intense anxiety at inappropriate times; sufferers may experience palpitations, feelings of faintness, chest pains, and a sensation that death is imminent, even when there is no apparent threat or danger; individuals who experience four or more unexplained attacks in a month, as well as individuals who have fewer attacks but live in constant fear of such an episode, may be suffering from the disorder

**posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)** a condition that results from experiencing or witnessing an unusually distressing event; symptoms range from repeatedly reliving the trauma, such as in dreams or flashbacks, to general emotional numbness, which often causes sufferers to withdraw from family and friends

**social phobia** an intense anxiety of being judged by others and/or publicly behaving in a way that could lead to embarrassment or ridicule; perhaps most common is fear of public speaking

**specific phobia** an illogical but real and intense fear of an object, such as dogs or insects, or a situation, such as flying or closed spaces; also known as single phobia or simple phobia