



## Anxiety Disorder Treatment Options

Anxiety disorders are real, serious, and treatable conditions. The vast majority of people with an anxiety disorder can be helped with the right professional care. Some people may respond to treatment after a few months, while others may take a year or more. Although treatment is individualized, there are several standard approaches that have proven to be effective. Health professionals may use one or a combination of these therapies.

### Behavior Therapy

- The goal of Behavior Therapy is to modify and gain control over unwelcome fears, anxieties, and behaviors. A patient gradually learns to cope with difficult situations or stimuli, often through controlled exposure to them. This kind of therapy attempts to give the individual a sense of control over his/her life.

### Cognitive Therapy

- Cognitive Therapy alters negative or harmful thought patterns that cause anxiety-provoking fears. The individual examines his/her feelings and learns to separate reasonable from unreasonable thoughts. As with Behavior Therapy, the individual is active in his/her recovery and acquires a sense of control.

### Cognitive-Behavior Therapy (CBT)

- Sometimes both Behavior Therapy and Cognitive Therapy are used to build recovery skills that can be helpful throughout a patient's lifetime. In the early stages of CBT, the therapy attempts to change the thoughts that prevent an individual from overcoming his/her fear. During the later stages, a patient may undergo some form of exposure and response prevention in which he/she is slowly exposed to the problematic stimuli and, with the help of his/her therapist, educated on how to cope with the resulting anxiety.

### Relaxation Techniques

- Relaxation Techniques can help individuals develop the ability to not only manage the stresses that increase their anxiety, but also to control some of the physical symptoms. This treatment includes breathing re-training and exercise.

### Medication

- Often used in combination with one or more of the therapies mentioned above, medications can be used to directly or indirectly alleviate the symptoms of an anxiety disorder. For example, anti-depressants or anxiolytics (anti-anxiety medication) may alleviate severe symptoms so that other forms of therapy can be more effective. Medication is helpful for many people and can be either a short-term or long-term treatment option, depending on the individual and the type of medication.

For more information on how to find a health professional or self-help group in your area, visit the Anxiety Disorders Association of America Web site at [www.adaa.org](http://www.adaa.org).