

Fear or anxiety?

How to distinguish them?



It's often said that depression poses a significant challenge in our civilization. Experts also highlight the phenomenon of societal anxiety, which has an impact on our lives. Both of these conditions are categorized as illnesses linked to our surroundings and way of life.

So, where does this anxiety stem from?

In our pursuit of securing success in life for ourselves and our children, we often anticipate various threats, yet we don't always take effective preventive measures. Consequently, children grow up in an atmosphere of anxiety, with messages like "You have to study, or you won't pass your exams" or "Don't behave that way, or no one will want to be around you." This has a lasting effect on the psyche of successive generations.

Moreover, in recent years, the role of media in our lives has expanded, contributing to an increase in the perceived level of anxiety. The human nervous system is designed in such a way that it's more likely to capture attention through content that evokes fear, leading media messages to often be saturated with unpleasant, and at times, downright alarming information.

Fear has big eyes

Fear typically arises in the face of a specific and immediate threat to an individual's life or health in the present moment. In contrast, anxiety is characterized by a more imagined and anticipatory nature, focusing on social threats such as the fear of humiliation or impact on self-esteem.

A significant distinction between them lies in the appropriateness of the reaction to the situation—fear is usually associated with a real threat (for example, hearing the sounds of an intruder in the room next door), while anxiety often involves disproportionate concerns (for instance, fearing criticism in a friendly environment).

Social anxiety is a prevalent issue affecting many individuals worldwide. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), approximately 264 million people globally suffer from anxiety disorders. The rates may vary in different countries and regions, but social anxiety is considered one of the most common mental health disorders.

What are the physical symptoms of anxiety?

Muscle tension:

Stiffness in the neck, shoulders, or back. Muscle contractions.

Body aches:

Headaches. Stomachaches. Chest pains (sometimes mistaken for heart issues).

Digestive issues:

Nausea. Heartburn. Other gastrointestinal discomforts.

Sleep problems:

Insomnia. Nightmares. Nighttime awakenings.

Changes in appetite:

Loss of appetite or excessive eating.

Skin changes:

Excessive sweating. Trembling hands. Redness or paleness of the skin.

Changes in breathing:

Shallow breathing. Rapid breathing (hyperventilation). Feeling of breathlessness.

Prevention

- Regular physical activity, a healthy diet, and adequate sleep can support overall mental and physical well-being, reducing susceptibility to anxiety. Relaxation exercises such as meditation, deep breathing, or yoga can help lower stress and anxiety levels.
- Developing stress management skills, such as time management, effective decision-making, and setting realistic goals, can contribute to reducing anxiety.
- Limiting the consumption of caffeine, alcohol, and other substances that may affect the nervous system can contribute to reducing anxiety levels.
- Strong social support can assist in coping with difficulties and reducing feelings of isolation, contributing to a decrease in anxiety.

If anxiety becomes difficult to control, it's worth consulting with a psychotherapist. Professional help can provide tools for coping with anxiety.

