



MONTHLY MENTAL HEALTH NEWSLETTER

Presented by the Gwinnett County Sheriff's Office Mental Health Task Force

In this issue:
Generalized Anxiety Disorder

What is Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)?

GAD is NOT just feeling nervous.

Those that suffer from GAD may experience constant and chronic worrying, stress, nervousness, and tension.

It is not the same as a phobia. A phobia is a fear about a specific thing.

GAD encompasses a general feeling of unease and worry that infiltrates your whole life.

While the effects of GAD are not as intense as a panic attack, they can last a lot longer and make what should be the most normal parts of our life tense and uncomfortable.

GAD is mentally and physically exhausting. It drains your energy, interferes with sleep, and wears your body out. Over time it may cause chronic health issues.

Signs and symptoms of GAD

Not everyone with Generalized Anxiety Disorder has the same symptoms. Most people with GAD experience a combination of emotional, behavioral, and physical symptoms that often fluctuate, becoming worse at times of stress.

Emotional Symptoms of GAD include:

Constant worries running through your head (also known as *Rumination*)

Feeling like your anxiety is uncontrollable: as though there is nothing you can do to stop the worrying

Intrusive thoughts about things that make you anxious; you try to avoid thinking about them, but you can't stop the thoughts from intruding

An inability to tolerate uncertainty: you need to know what's going to happen in the future and you need this information in detail or you won't be able to relax

A pervasive feeling of apprehension or dread

Behavioral symptoms of GAD include:

Inability to relax, enjoy quiet time, or be by yourself

Difficulty concentrating or focusing on activities and tasks

Putting things off because you feel overwhelmed (*chronic procrastination*)

Avoiding situations even though the situation may be necessary (work, school)

Physical symptoms of GAD include:

Feeling tense; having muscle tightness or body aches

Having trouble falling asleep or staying asleep because you can't quiet your mind

Feeling edgy, restless, or jumpy (lowered startle threshold)

Stomach problems, nausea, diarrhea, increase acid reflux

GAD self-help tips :

1. **Connect with others-**social interaction with people that care about you is a very effective tool to combat GAD

2. **Build a strong support system-** Humans are social creatures. We are not meant to live in isolation. Even a small network of support will help.

3. **Talk to your network when your worries start-** talking openly and in person with a friend or loved one can lower your anxiety.

4. **Know who to avoid when you are feeling anxious-** When considering who to turn to, ask yourself whether you tend to feel better or worse after talking to that person about a problem. For example, if your brother is a constant worrier then he may be the wrong person to go to for comfort no matter how close you may be.

5. **Be aware that having GAD can get in the way of your ability to connect with others-** How do you act towards others when you're feeling anxious. Especially anxious about a relationship? Do you test your partner? Withdraw? Make accusations? Become clingy and drain their energy? If you become aware of your behavior, you can look for better ways to deal with any fears or insecurities you're feeling. Feeling better is **your** responsibility. It's not your friends or loved one's job to lower your anxiety. Remember you can do it with some self care.

"Normal" Worry vs. GAD

"Normal" Worry:	GAD
Your worrying doesn't get in the way of your daily activities and responsibilities.	Your worry significantly disrupts your job, activities, or social life.
You're able to control your worrying.	Your worrying is uncontrollable.
Your worries, while unpleasant, don't cause significant distress.	Worries are extremely upsetting and stressful, to the point that you can develop Depression as well as other physical illnesses.
Your worries are limited to a specific, small number of realistic concerns.	You worry about all sorts of things. You worry about things both in and not in your control. You tend to expect the worst.
Your bouts of worrying last for only a short time period.	You've been worrying almost every day for at least six months.

REFERENCES

The following sources were used in the creation of this Mental Health Newsletter. The G.C.S.O. Mental Health Tasks Force encourages you to utilize these and other sources such as the *Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)* to learn more about this important health topic.

Diagnostic Statistical Manual –V, American Psychiatric Association, June 2013

National Institute of Mental Health (2013). Anxiety. Retrieved March 23, 2021, from <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/anxiety/index.shtml>