

Ask Your Therapist

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Anxiety

To make a distinction between fear and anxiety we might say that fear has an object (dogs, spiders, strangers) whereas anxiety has many of the same feelings without a specific object (fear of being inadequate, being less than, being humiliated or publicly exposed). Specific phobias are fears such as the fear of heights, flying, animals, receiving an injection, seeing blood, etc.

Anxiety disorders may occur in the form of: panic attacks, agoraphobia (anxiety about being in a place or situation from which escape might be difficult or embarrassing), social anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), acute stress reaction, generalized anxiety disorder, anxiety due to a medical condition, substance-induced anxiety and non-specific anxiety.

When a person comes to therapy complaining about anxiety, I use several approaches at once. First, I get a history of the anxiety to understand its origins and what solutions have been attempted. I check to see if it is one of the anxieties that tend to run in families. Once my client and I understand where the anxiety came from we can make a plan to deal with it. Behavioral therapy approaches are often very fast and effective in decreasing anxiety. Sometimes a client will also choose to use medication as a short-term solution while they are working on other approaches to the anxiety. An example of this would be someone with acute fear of flying who has to fly on a business trip.

There has been a lot of coverage in the news about PTSD in our soldiers who are returning from combat overseas. In the "old days" it was called "shell shock" and recently I heard that, as part of being debriefed after combat, soldiers are routinely being assessed for PTSD. What a blessing to have this painful condition treated along with all the physical ailments of combat!

If you suffer from anxiety, please consider getting help for yourself. So many people are needlessly trapped at home because they don't get help for their agoraphobia, their social anxiety or other forms of anxiety. Help is available!

To read all the prior Ask Your Therapist columns go to www.krishnabai.com where you can also send Krishnabai a general question for her column.

Krishnabai, MSW is a therapist in Ashby and Wellesley Hills where she sees adults, older teens and couples. The core of her work is the discovery and expression of the Authentic Self. She focuses on the identification, expression,

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