Anxiety Disorders

Psychology 311
Abnormal Psychology

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Overview

• Definition
  - Diffuse, vague, unpleasant feeling of fear and apprehension
  - Worries about unknown dangers
• Different from Fear
  - Fear – you can state what you are afraid of
  - Anxiety – Usually cannot identify the cause

More overview

• More common in women
• Becomes evident in late teens and early twenties
• Can last 20 years or more
• Children who have experiences in which they have no control
  - May be vulnerable to anxiety disorders

Symptoms

• Physical
  - Shortness of breath
  - Rapid heart rate
  - Frequent Urination
  - Diarrhea
  - Loss of appetite
  - Sleeplessness
  - Fainting
  - Dizziness
  - Sweating
  - Tremors
  - Others

Psychological

• Exaggerated distressing interpretations
• Nervous
• Irritable
• Jumpy
• Tense

Types of Maladaptive Behavior

• Two Groups
  - Frequent experience of anxiety, worry and apprehension
    - Is more intense and lasts longer than the average person
  - Frequent development of avoidance behaviors, ritual acts, or repetitive thoughts
    - Protects the individual from experiencing anxiety
Four Types of Disorders
- Generalized Anxiety Disorders
- Panic disorders
- Phobic Disorders
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorders

Generalized Anxiety Disorders
- Anxiety that persists for at least 6 months
- Is not attributed to a recent life event

Symptoms
- Worry and apprehensive feelings about the future
  - Worry over
    - Self,
    - People close to them
    - Valued Possessions
- Hypervigilance
  - Constantly scan environment for danger
    - Always alert to potential threats – distractions
    - Cannot fall asleep

Other Symptoms
- Motor Tension
  - Unable to relax – stay keyed up
  - Motor tremors / shakes
  - Have strained facial expressions
  - Deep sighs, furrowed brow
  - Easily startled

Automatic Reactivity
- Sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems work overtime
- Dizzy, sweating, heart racing or pounding
- Hot / cold spells
- Upset stomach
- Lump in the throat
- Frequent bathroom use
- High pulse rate

Result
- Many individuals with anxiety disorders experience substance abuse problems
- Often are used to stop symptoms
  - Alcohol
    - Makes the person relax
  - Methamphetamine
    - Makes the person feel “Normal”
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Treatment

• Is difficult to treat
• No clinical technique results in a cure
• Drug treatment
  • Long-term use
    • Often develop side effects
  • Develop tolerance
• Try to identify cues
  • Use negative reinforcement models to remove the fear.

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Panic Attacks

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Background

• Indicators
  • Are similar to generalized disorder.
  • Symptoms are sudden and magnified.
  • Occurs more often in women
  • Can differ in degree of incapacitation
  • Usually no evidence for a childhood traumatic event
  • Are heavy users of health care facilities and hospital emergency rooms

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Symptoms

• Sudden, overwhelming, senseless terror
• Feeling of impending doom***
• Is an intense surge of anxiety that raises to a peak
• Can last a few seconds to days
• Can occur anywhere and at anytime
  • Movie
  • In bed
  • In cars

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Panic Disorders

• Cued by a thought or particular stimulus
• May also have an intense fear of another panic attack
  • Anticipatory anxiety
  • Must occur for at least one month

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Research

• Individuals see themselves at having impairments in their physical and emotional well being
• Depression is more common
• Alcoholism is more common
• Panic sufferers are more prone than the general population to think about committing suicide
  • 20% report attempting suicide
Cognitive Processes

- Include thoughts of
- Humiliation
- Losing control
- Helplessness
- Failure

Treatment

- Impramine (used for depression)
  - Has been shown to help panic attacks not occur
    - Does not help anticipatory anxiety
  - Thought blocking techniques with relaxation training also helpful
  - Best seen from a biological and psychological perspective
  - Incorporate treatment from both areas