

## The American Counseling Association's "Counseling Corner" Weekly Columns

### When Anxiety Becomes Overwhelming

from the American Counseling Association

We all feel anxiety at times. We may be anxious about a new job, moving to a new city, entering into a romantic relationship. This normal, everyday anxiety is usually a type of stress that we learn to cope with fairly easily. But for some people, stress can bring on crippling levels of anxiety, what is commonly referred to as an "anxiety disorder."

Anxiety disorders are actually the most common form of mental health issues in the United States today. Some estimates say this problem affect nearly 1 in 5 adults.

When someone is suffering from an anxiety disorder they experience longer periods of excessive worrying or fear than one would expect from everyday types of stress. Anxiety disorders can include irrational fears of certain situations and may bring on real physical symptoms such as headaches, stomach and muscle aches, or, in some cases, sudden, intense physical anxiety with shortness of breath or a rapid heartbeat.

Being able to prevent serious bouts of anxiety involves becoming more aware of the stresses you face in life and of your abilities to be able to cope with those stresses. Finding the help needed to deal with these issues normally requires the assistance of a trained mental health professional.

It can be hard to admit that one is facing a mental or emotional problem and that help is needed. The reality is, however, that dealing with a mental issue, such as an anxiety disorder, is actually no different that dealing with a physical ailment that is making the enjoyment of life difficult.

You would not hesitate to see a medical professional if you had a broken ankle that was causing you pain and keeping you from living normally. Why should seeing a mental health professional for help with a disorder that is having the same sort of impact on your life be any different?

Mental health professionals, such as professional counselors, have a variety of tools that can help in dealing with anxiety disorders. The treatment process usually begins with identifying the behaviors, emotions and stresses that are contributing to the problem, and then will move on to appropriate therapies that can help the client regain a sense of control and pleasure in life.

An anxiety disorder can make enjoying a normal life difficult. If it's a problem you face, talk to a professional counselor and discover the help available.

*"Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to [ACAcornet@counseling.org](mailto:ACAcornet@counseling.org) or visit the ACA website at [www.counseling.org](http://www.counseling.org).*

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words: 397