Anxiety Disorder: Types And PTSD Symptoms

Anxiety Disorder

Specific phobias usually develop at a young age as a result of an early traumatic experience or witnessing the phobia of a family member. A complex phobia like social phobia or agoraphobia, are believed by researchers to result from a combination of life experiences, genetics and brain chemistry.

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

The American Psychiatric Asssive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) as “recurrent obsessions or compulsions that are severe enough to be time consuming or cause marked distress or significant impairment”. OCD is characterized by unwanted thoughts and behaviors that appear impossible to control or stop, obsessions are uninvited and intrusive urges, thoughts or images that surface in the mind over and over, like concerns about linearity or contamination or forbidden sexual or religious thoughts.

Compulsions are behaviors or rituals that a person indulges in as a means to reduce or suppress his or her obsessive thoughts, these actions are aimed at reducing or preventing distress or a feared situation, such as ordering or arranging things in a particular order, compulsive counting, excessive cleaning and or handwashing. Many individuals affected by OCD are aware of the fact that their compulsions are irrational but they are stuck in the cycle of obsession and compulsion.

This anxiety disorder involves continuous unwanted thoughts, and often results in the performance of elaborate ‘rituals’ in an attempt to banish or control the persistent thoughts. The ‘rituals’ are usually time-consuming and interfere seriously with everyday life. It is also characterized by muscle tension and discomfort.

Some individuals with OCD sometimes have a tic disorder like eye blinking, shoulder shrugging, head or shoulder jerking, sniffing or throat clearing. Symptoms may come and go, ease or worsen over time, some people with OCD take to avoiding situations that may trigger their obsessions or turn to drugs and alcohol to help them cope.

The causes of OCD are unknown but if left unchecked it can affect all aspects of a person’s life.

Posttraumatic stress disorder

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) involves the “development of characteristic symptoms following exposure to an extreme traumatic stressor”. This anxiety disorder is characterized by the failure of the person to recover after witnessing or experiencing a terrifying event. The person’s reaction to the event usually involves helplessness, intense fear and horror.

PTSD is a condition that may last for months or years, with triggers that bring back vivid memories of the trauma usually accompanied by intense physical and emotional reactions.

People who have PTSD may feel stressed or threatened even when there is no danger in the vicinity. PTSD symptoms may start within a month of the occurrence of the traumatic event, but sometimes the symptoms of may not appear until years after the event.

PTSD symptoms are generally grouped into four broad types;

- Avoidance; symptoms of avoidance include avoiding activities, people or places that bring up memories of the traumatic event, trying to avoid talking or thinking about the traumatic event.
- Changes in physical and emotional reactions; these symptoms include difficulty sleeping, angry outbursts, irritability or aggressive behavior, constant alertness towards danger, difficulty concentrating, overwhelming sense of guilt or shame and easily being startled or frightened.
- Negative changes in thinking and mood; these symptoms include negative thoughts about self, others and the world in general, lack of interest in activities previously enjoyed, emotional numbness, difficulty maintaining close relationships, difficulty experiencing positive emotions, hopelessness about the future, detachment from family and friends, memory problems includig inability to remember important aspects of the traumatic event.
- Intrusive memories; symptoms of intrusive memories include reliving the traumatic event as it was happening again, severe physical and emotional distress to things that bring recollection of the traumatic event, recurrent, unwanted distressing memories of the traumatic event, nightmares or upsetting dreams about the events.

Anyone may develop PTSD when they experience, see or learn about an event involving, serious injury, actual or threatened death or sexual violation. The most common events that lead to the development of PTSD are physical assault, sexual violence, combat exposure, an accident, being threatened with a weapon, childhood physical abuse, fire, kidnapping, natural disaster, torture, terrorist attack, robbery and other extreme of life-threatening events.

PTSD if left unchecked for long enough can disrupt the entire life of the individual affected by it, impacting their daily activities, relationships, health and job. PTSD also increases the individual’s chances of depression, eating disorders, alcohol or drug abuse and suicidal thoughts or actions.