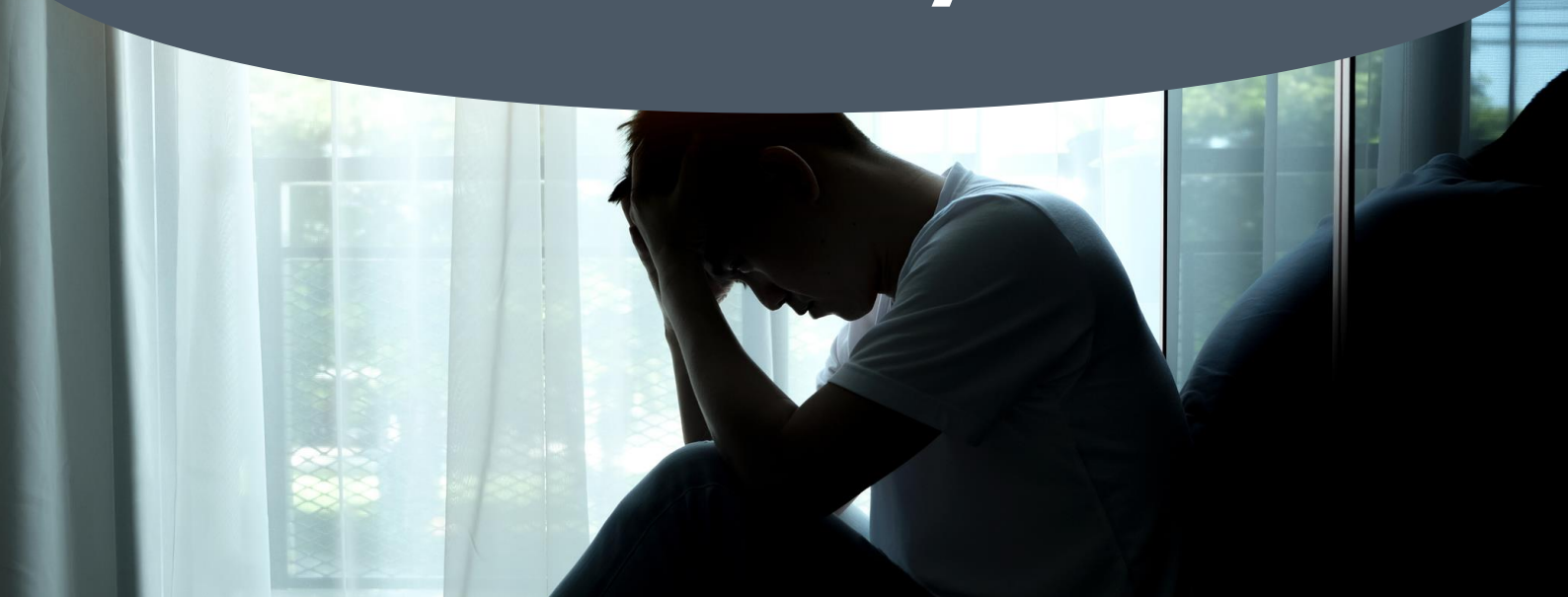


# Understanding anxiety



**Mental Health Awareness week this year is from 15-21 May**

This year's theme is 'anxiety'. Focusing on anxiety will increase people's awareness and understanding of anxiety by providing information on the things that can help prevent it from becoming a problem.

## Understanding anxiety

Just like stress, anxiety can be hard to define. We can identify three different types.

1

**Fear** - a feeling that we experience in the face of threatening or difficult situations. It helps us recognise dangerous situations and motivates us to address problems but can become debilitating in the long term.

2

**Panic**- an unexpected surge of negative feeling and acute anxiety, characterized by an inability to think and a desire to escape the situation that you are in immediately.

3

**Phobia** - a constant, extreme or irrational fear of an animal, object, place or situation that would not normally worry the majority of people.

Anxiety is a normal reaction to stress and can help us deal with difficult situations such as confrontations and tests. It actually helps us to cope. But if it becomes excessive and chronic, it can develop into a disabling disorder such as General Anxiety Disorder (GAD) Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

## The warning signs

Some symptoms of stress, like panic attacks and extreme tension, are easy to spot. There are, however, a whole range of cumulative symptoms that can creep up on us without us really realising what's going on. They can be:

**Physical** - fatigue, headaches, back pain, insomnia, indigestion, cramps, constipation, diarrhoea, sweatiness and sleeping too much.

**Mental** - forgetfulness, poor concentration, boredom, paranoia and perfectionism.

**Emotional** - irritability, depression, mood swings, apathy and increased sensitivity to criticism.

**Relational** - loneliness, withdrawal, intolerance and relationship problems.

**Behavioural** - substance abuse, eating problems, overwork and procrastination.

**Spiritual** - sense of emptiness, loss of beliefs and sense of meaning and cynicism.



Learning to spot the warning signs is the first step to dealing effectively with stress. People who are unaware of what is happening to them are much more likely to resort unthinkingly to negative coping strategies, such as heavy drinking, overeating, overspending and overwork.

Once you've recognised the symptoms, it is also crucial to remember that they are perfectly normal responses to life's pressures. This will stop you from falling into the trap of thinking something is "wrong" with you for feeling this way and put you quickly into a position to do something constructive about it.

## Want to know more?

If your business currently partners with CiC, please reach out for further support.

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