

## What is anxiety?

It is an emotional state with unpleasant feelings of apprehension, dread, distress and uneasiness.

## Symptoms of anxiety can include:

- Heart Palpitations
- Nausea
- Chest Pain
- Shortness of Breath
- Stomach Aches
- Headaches

We can experience anxiety when we see or come across something associated with a previous traumatic experience. We feel temporarily relieved when we avoid or remove ourselves from situations which make us feel anxious. However, this only increases anxiety next time and we will want to escape the situation again. That way we will not make any progress in reducing our anxiety but will intensify the emotions or “fear”.

Anxiety can affect a person’s ability to work, study, and participate in other activities. So it is important to seek help.

## Where to get help:

- Doctor
- Psychologist
- Counsellor
- Local Community Health Centre

## Some things you can do to look after yourself:

### Exercise

The physical symptoms of anxiety are caused by the “flight-fight” response, which floods the body with adrenaline – a stress chemical. Exercise helps to burn up adrenaline and promotes relaxation.

### Diet

Make sure your diet includes wholegrain cereals, leafy green vegetables and low fat dairy products. Be careful of nicotine and caffeine because they can trigger to the release of adrenaline, with caffeine in particular serving to heighten your attention and anxiety / startle response.

*This fact sheet has been developed to provide general information to victims of crime. It is not intended as a replacement for medical, therapeutic or legal advice. If you have particular concerns please contact your general practitioner, counsellor or Victim Support Service.*

## **Learning to be Assertive**

Being assertive means letting others know about your needs, wants, feelings, beliefs and opinions in a direct and honest manner without intentionally hurting anyone's feelings. A person who is anxious may have trouble being assertive because they try to avoid conflict or believe they have no right to speak up. Relating to others that way can lower self-confidence and reinforces anxiety. Learning to behave assertively is central to developing self-esteem and confidence.

## **Building Self-Esteem**

People who are anxious often have low self-esteem and when interacting with others fear they will be judged harshly. Low self esteem can also impact on feelings of isolation, shame and guilt. Counselling may help you to "strengthen" your self-esteem.

## **Acknowledgements**

Source: Better Health Channel – [www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)  
Dupont, Robert L. MD., Dupont, Spencer, Elizabeth. MSW., Dupont, Caroline M. MD. The Anxiety Cure. An Eight-Step Program for Getting Well, John Wiley & Sons Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey. 2003 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition.

## **Further Information**

If you would like more information, please contact Victim Support Service on (08) 8231 5626 or view our website at [www.victimsa.org](http://www.victimsa.org)