

Recognising and Responding to Stress or Anxiety in Others

Anxiety is more than just feeling stressed or worried. While stress and anxious feelings are a common response to a situation where we feel under pressure, they usually pass once the stressful situation has passed, or 'stressor' is removed.

Everyone feels anxious from time to time. When anxious feelings don't go away, happen without any particular reason or make it hard to cope with daily life it may be the sign of an anxiety condition.

These are some of the symptoms that are indicators of too much pressure that can come from within, work, home, any combination of, or maybe even all three. They may be indicators of stress or if they don't abate once the stressor has been removed they may be indicators of anxiety condition.

Recognising Stress or Anxiety

Psychological signs

- Inability to concentrate or make simple decisions
- Memory lapses
- Becoming rather vague
- Easily distracted
- Less intuitive & creative
- Worrying
- Negative thinking
- Depression & anxiety

Emotional signs

- Tearful
- Irritable
- Mood swings
- Extra sensitive to criticism
- Defensive
- Feeling out of control
- Lack of motivation
- Angry
- Frustrated
- Lack of confidence
- Lack of self-esteem

Behavioural signs

- No time for relaxation or pleasurable activities
- Prone to accidents, forgetfulness

- Increased reliance on alcohol, smoking, caffeine, recreational or illegal drugs
- Becoming a workaholic
- Poor time management and/or poor standards of work
- Absenteeism
- Self-neglect/change in appearance
- Social withdrawal
- Relationship problems
- Insomnia or waking tired
- Reckless
- Aggressive/anger outbursts
- Nervous
- Uncharacteristically lying

Responding to Stress or Anxiety

A useful acronym – ALGEE

- A Approach the person, assess and assist with any crisis**
- L Listen and communicate, non-judgementally**
- G Give support and information**
- E Encourage the person to get appropriate professional help**
- E Encourage other supports**

A. Approach the person, assess and assist with any crisis

- Approach the person about your concerns about their stress or anxiety
- Find a suitable time and space where you both feel comfortable
- If the person does not initiate a conversation with you about how they are feeling, you should say something to them
- Respect the person's privacy and confidentiality
- As you talk with the person, be on the lookout for any indications that they may be in crisis.

L. Listen and communicate, non-judgementally

- Some of the main points to remember are;
- Engage the person in discussing how they are feeling and listen carefully to what they say
- Do not express any negative judgements about the person's character or situation
- Be aware of your body language, including posture, eye contact and physical position

- To ensure you understand what the person says, reflect back what you hear, ask clarifying questions
- Allow silences, be patient, do not interrupt, use minimal prompts such as “I see” and “Ah”
- Do not give flippant or unhelpful advice such as “pull yourself together”
- Avoid confrontation unless necessary to prevent harmful act

G. Give Support and Information

You can support the person in the following ways;

- Treat the person with dignity
- Do not blame them
- Have realistic expectations
- Offer consistent emotional support and understanding
- Give them hope
- Provide practical support
- Offer information
- It is not supportive to be dismissive “toughen up or don’t be weak” or be patronising.

E. Encourage the person to get appropriate professional help

WH EAP – Caraniche at Work

Phone 1800 099 444 ((available 24 hours a day, 7 days)

Email: work@caranich.com.au

Online booking: <https://work.caraniche.com.au/make-a-booking/>

E. Encourage other supports

- Encourage the person to consider other support available to them, family, friends

Responding to Panic Attacks

How to assess a panic attack

Signs and symptoms:

- Palpitations, rapid heart rate
- Sweating
- Trembling and shaking
- Shortness of Breath, sensations of choking, smothering
- Chest pain
- Abdominal Distress

- Dizziness, light-headedness
- Feelings of unreality
- Feelings of losing control
- Fear of dying
- Numbness or tingling
- Chills or hot flushes

How to assist

The symptoms of a panic attack resemble a heart attack or other medical condition. If they have not had a panic attack before and doesn't think they are having one now, apply first aid principals. If they lose consciousness, apply first aid principles.

What to say and do during the attack?

- Reassure the person
- Stay calm
- Be patient
- Speak clearly and slowly
- Ask they person what they need and what might help
- Acknowledge
- Assure their safety

A few practical techniques

- You could also say: "Would it be helpful if I try and redirect your mind?" They will probably be able to nod at that. From here, your goal is to de-escalate their mind from a state of primal fear – fight or flight – and back into a more measured way of thinking. You want to engage other parts of the brain so their body stops pumping itself with adrenaline.
- Give them out-of-order number sequences such as 7, 8, 11, 15, 21, 2, 7, 10 and ask them to repeat them.
- Play the alphabet game. Pick a topic such as 'animals' and take it in turns to name a different thing in that topic with each letter of the alphabet – so "antelope", "bear", "cow" and so on.
- Try sensory redirection. Give the panicking person a drink or give them an object and say "feel that, focus on what the texture feels like".

What to say and do after the attack?

- Assist with information
- Encourage them to get appropriate help
- Reassure the person there is treatment available