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Method



Powiatowe Centrum
Pomocy Rodzinie
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Anxiety is an integral part of life in today's world. It is a natural emotional state that appears in everyday life situations, such as public speaking, an interview or an exam. In some moments, reacting with fear is appropriate and necessary, it protects us from taking risky and life-threatening actions. The state of concern is when the anxiety persists for a long time, thus preventing normal functioning in life, and the person experiencing anxiety cannot cope with everyday matters and cannot control this negative emotional state. Anxiety becomes a disorder when it begins to exert a paralyzing effect on a person's life - when it significantly reduces its quality and limits its functioning (e.g. causing withdrawal from social life) and is a source of mental suffering.

Anxiety disorders differ from the normal one which is acceptable in everyday life anxiety, when the anxiety occurring in them is:

- more intense - excessive, inadequate to the situation (e.g. panic attacks)
- long-lasting (persists for weeks or even months and does not subside despite the fact that the stimulus that caused it has passed long time ago)
- leads to phobias that prevent daily functioning.

Anxiety disorders occur in both adults and children, more often in women than men. They are thought to be one of the most common mental disorders.

The main types of anxiety disorders are:

- panic disorder - severe anxiety attack combined with a feeling of terror and vegetative symptoms (e.g. fear of death),
- appreciable anxiety - related to waiting for an alleged event that you don't really know about,
- slow flowing anxiety - penetrating, indefinite anxiety,
- alleged anxiety - arising on the basis of perceptions about the threat rather than the actual state,
- hidden anxiety - displacement from a manifestation into a form, e.g. somatic,
- situational (phobic) fear - fear of a specific situation that leads to its avoidance,
- agitation - severe anxiety combined with motor restlessness,
- fear of fear - waiting anxiety for an anxiety attack.

There are the following types of anxiety disorders:

- Anxiety disorder with panic attacks

They are characterized by a sudden, sharp or intense attack of fear. It is important that the attack appears for no apparent reason and lasts no more than a few minutes. It happens that it returns with "waves" for up to two hours.

The following symptoms may occur during an attack:

- shortness of breath
- dizziness,
- hot or cold flashes,
- nausea and stomach aches,
- rapid heartbeat, palpitations,
- a sense of unreality, the feeling of being 'out of body',
- tingling or numbness in the hands or feet,
- balance problems, fainting,
- sweating,
- pain in the chest,

- fear of dying, fear of loss of senses
- Generalized anxiety disorder

They are characterized by long-term, chronic anxiety (lasting for at least 6 months) without additional symptoms such as panic or phobia. It is important that anxiety and worry concern at least two areas of life, such as e.g. finances, family relationships, health, work or study.

These disorders are accompanied by the following symptoms:

- problems with sleeping,
- feeling nervous or anxious,
- problems with concentration,
- irritability,
- getting tired quickly
- muscle tension.
- Obsessive compulsive disorder

They are characterized by intrusive, recurrent thoughts (obsessions), which are accompanied by repetitive or even ritual behavior (e.g. frequent hand washing).

Obsessions are recurring thoughts, impulses or imaginations. They are meaningless, irrational, but persistently return despite attempts to suppress them.

Compulsions are behaviors or rituals performed to get rid of obsessions. The most common are: hand washing, counting, checking (e.g. whether the light has been turned off or the door closed).

- Anxiety disorder - post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

They are characterized by the fact that mental symptoms are a consequence of a traumatic event. Although dramatic events are a thing of the past, people with this disorder are still struggling with symptoms. The most common are:

- recurring nightmares associated with a traumatic event,
- problems with sleeping,
- intrusive, constantly recurring thoughts and memories that make the patient feel as if he was experiencing a dramatic event over and over again,
- avoiding thoughts and feelings that are associated with trauma,
- avoiding activities that are associated with a dramatic event,
- anesthesia, emotional numbness,
- lack of interest in activities that previously (before the occurrence of a traumatic event) gave pleasure,
- avoiding contact with other people

For the first time, this disorder was diagnosed during World War I by soldiers. They suffered from prolonged anxiety caused by persistent, recurring war memories.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can develop in anyone who has suffered a severe trauma and has experienced suffering beyond the limits of human comprehension.

- Anxiety disorder in the form of a phobia

Phobias are irrational, chronic fears of something. It can be a situation, an object or social relations and interactions. A phobia is not a one-time experience. Occurs whenever a phobic item appears. It also happens that it turns into an

obsession, e.g. obsessive fear of losing a loved one or fear of death, although we are completely healthy.

There are the following types of phobias:

- social phobia - fear of establishing relationships with other people or finding yourself in a specific social situation,
- agoraphobia - fear of open space (people suffering from this type of phobia are afraid of being in a place where it would be difficult to escape or getting help would be difficult or impossible)
- specific forms of phobia - fear of a particular type of object or a situation associated with avoidance (e.g. fear of animals, before visiting a doctor, riding an elevator, illness, etc.)

Due to their nature, anxiety disorders can cause complications. The most common complications of anxiety disorders include:

- depression
- problems with coping with stress,
- infections
- sleep disturbance
- digestive problems
- teeth grinding
- eating disorders,
- alcoholism
- drug addiction,
- feeling helpless
- feeling lonely, which can lead to suicide.

Anxiety disorders can be caused by a variety of factors. There are the following reasons:

1. Predisposing, those which are conditioned by childhood events (operating in a long time) These are:

- heredity
- factors related to the period of childhood, way of raising a child, e.g. too high requirements for the child, suppression of assertiveness, teaching the child excessive caution in the surrounding world, failure to provide an adequate level of security, emotional dependence,
- increasing and persistent stress.

2. Biological

There are more evidence suggesting that biological factors are involved in anxiety disorders. Specific types of anxiety disorders are more common in relatives, suggesting genetic factors.

• Direct causes

These are triggering factors acting in a short time, which include:

- stimulations that cause panic attacks (stressors), e.g. an important life change, loss of a loved one, stimulants, drugs,
- post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), trauma, specific phobias.

• Supporting causes

These are factors directly related to lifestyle, attitudes and behaviors that can promote the development of anxiety

disorders. These include, among others:

- lack of assertiveness,
- erroneous, unsupportive beliefs,
- stressful lifestyle,
- avoiding situations that trigger fear,
- emotional withdrawal,
- improper diet,
- no sense of life or sense of purpose in life.

Analysis of the above factors shows that among them we can influence, to a greater or lesser extent (e.g. lifestyle, life attitudes), and those on whose occurrence we have no influence (e.g. hereditary factors, traumatic events) .

It is worth focusing especially on those that are a subject to our influence.

When we include into everyday life physical exercises, breathing and relaxation techniques, proper eating habits, attention and work with emotions, internal dialogue, beliefs, assertiveness, self-esteem and self-confidence; can make life more balanced and anxiety disorders unlikely.

The treatment of anxiety disorders depends on the individual condition of the patient. Mild symptoms can be silenced by relaxation techniques or lifestyle changes. If you are dealing with more serious symptoms, which in addition persist for a long time, use the professional help of a psychologist or psychiatrist.

Psychological therapies help to regain balance and prevent recurrence of anxiety. One of the most popular forms is behavioral-cognitive psychotherapy, during which a person experiencing anxiety disorders learns to see mechanisms and patterns in their own way of thinking and acting. He recognizes those that predispose to anxiety. If negative patterns are recognized, you can consciously and intentionally change them into ones that will be supportive, and above all they will reduce anxiety and strengthen the skills to deal with it.

Based on developed by P.C. Kendall's "STOP" plan, one can distinguish four stages of the therapeutic process in the case of drug disorders.

- The first step is to recognize the feeling of anxiety. At this stage, it is important to observe yourself and your own physiological reactions. The idea is to identify the mechanism. Learn to notice in time how your body reacts in situations where anxiety occurs. It will be helpful to ask yourself: "Am I already afraid?", "What is happening to my body?", "What do I feel?"

At this stage, relaxation techniques (e.g. focus on breath, meditation, Sedona method) can be introduced to alleviate physiological symptoms.

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- In the next stage, focus on internal speech. Observation should refer to thoughts related to anxiety (identifying the thoughts preceding anxiety and "anxiety speech", i.e. what I think when I feel anxiety, what scenarios I create in my head, what I expect). Identifying negative mental patterns allows you to change them into positive, supportive ones. It is worth paying attention to internal dialogue and looking at common mental traps, which include:

- skipping the positives - downplaying your own achievements and successes, diminishing yourself ("It came easily, so it has no greater value", "It worked")
- excessive generalization - assuming that if something bad happened once, then the next time, in a similar situation,

the same will happen (“Nobody understands me”, “I always get bad at interviews”)

- black glasses - focusing on negative aspects, not noticing the positive ones
- catastrophe - assuming that the worst possible scenario will happen (“If I don’t get this job, I’ll end up under the bridge”)
- black and white thinking - perceiving people and situations in terms of “all or nothing” (“If I don’t pass this exam it means I’m a loser”)
- predicting the future - predicting the future in black colors („I will not pass this exam”, “I will not get a job”),
- mind reading - assuming that I know what other people think (“They think I’m hopeless”),
- labeling - assigning negative qualities to yourself and other people (“I’m stupid”, “He is unfair”
- generalizing - creating very general conclusions based on individual events (“All men are hopeless”)
- abuse of statements such as “I must”, “I should”, „it has to, „(“I must get this job”, “I should take exams best”)

3. Step three involves rejecting passivity and developing a plan to deal with anxiety.

It is necessary to examine various options for changing the situation, determine which action will be nearest and easiest to carry out

4. Step four is the process of judging and rewarding yourself. It is important that everyone decides for themselves whether they are satisfied with themselves and their work in the therapeutic process, and sets a reward for it.

Returning to the methods of dealing with anxiety, we should mention pharmacotherapy (antidepressants with anxiolytic effect and benzodiazepines). It is used most often in people whose anxiety is very severe and impedes functioning, and those who, for various reasons, cannot undergo psychotherapy. It is worth emphasizing that drugs are a temporary solution in the process of dealing with anxiety.

The following tips are no substitute for professional help, but they may be useful. When anxiety occurs:

- postpone serious life changes - these are difficult situations even without increased fear, so if possible, postpone serious decisions until you feel better,
- take care of relationships - problems in relationships can contribute to anxiety, so work on communication skills and solve problems as they begin to grow,
- maintain a healthy lifestyle - eating healthy, exercising regularly and getting enough sleep can help you deal with anxiety,
- use relaxation techniques - meditate, practice mindfulness, focus on the breath, develop your own set of techniques that are useful to you,
- limit your consumption of alcohol and stimulants - they can cause long-term problems and hinder recovery;
- work developmentally on shaping the right sense of value, confidence and assertiveness.

Anxiety is a factor that sabotages our actions. His opposite is self-confidence, a state of good emotional well-being and comfort of feeling when performing various activities. This attitude makes life much easier, and at the same time a kind of mirror in which we look and we know how we feel about ourselves.

Confidence has many definitions and affects us at many levels:

- cognitive - thoughts, memories, beliefs,
- emotional - feelings and emotions,
- Behavioral - behaviors and words,
- physiological - changes occurring in our body, e.g. change in pulse.

An important element of the confidence building process is to identify activating situations, i.e. situations in which we lose confidence. They usually fall into one of the following categories:

- social situations - for people with low self-confidence, various social interactions are difficult, regardless of where they occur,
- situation related to the task - the need to perform a specific task reduces self-confidence, especially when the results of previous work have been evaluated,
- automatically appearing negative “black” thoughts,
- pondering - confidence decreases when thoughts of past events torment you.

The activating situation (A) triggers beliefs (B) that have negative consequences (C): feelings (e.g. anxiety, uncertainty) or behavior. The described process is an ABC model, developed by the renowned psychologist Albert Ellis.

Beliefs are different judgments, concepts and generalizations about the reality that surrounds us, which we consider to be true and fundamental (“You have to work hard for money,” “I don’t deserve love”). By their nature, they are somewhat limited. They always constitute a generalization and simplification of reality.

Changing beliefs from negative, limiting to positive, supportive is an important stage in the process of building healthy confidence and dealing with anxiety disorders.

There are many ways to change beliefs, and their effectiveness will vary from person to person. Due to the fact that beliefs are a kind of simplification, it is possible to undermine and consequently change them by examining their sources. By asking the right questions and searching for answers, you can identify where they are falsified.

Such questions include:

- Why?
- How do you know?
- How?
- Which of them?
- In what situations?
- In what situations not?
- How often?
- In whose opinion?
- Where / when / with whom?
- What is the conclusion?

Beliefs have many sources. These include: upbringing in the family, school, modeling by people important to us (parents, grandparents, friends, teachers, acquaintances), past experiences. The factor that influences the formation of beliefs is the environment in which we live

Beliefs about yourself influence our attitude in life. Positive ones strengthen our self-esteem and sense of value. However, those from the “restrictive” category have the opposite effect. The way we think about other people has an impact on the relationships we build with them and their quality. The size of your circle of friends, friendship durability and building lasting relationships based on love and trust depend on it. Beliefs affect our sense of satisfaction with life, strongly affect the emotions we experience. When we are accompanied by “winging” beliefs, we experience pleasant emotions such as: self-confidence, satisfaction, happiness, acceptance, delight, and

similarly with “limiting” beliefs, we are accompanied by unpleasant emotions such as: fear, anxiety, frustration, dislike, uncertainty, shame.

Working with beliefs is difficult, time-consuming and often requires support from a psychologist or therapist. However, it is an extremely important element in the process of building self-confidence and coping with anxiety disorders and stress.

Self-confidence is shaped over the years, and the process of building it consists of a number of internal and external factors. Especially if we mean deep and true self-confidence as our feature, and not the attitude that we temporarily adopt or try to develop in given situations.

Real and constant self-confidence results above all from self-awareness of one’s thoughts and feelings. Many people cheat themselves, make decisions based on false premises and cannot get inside and have real feelings, their own self. Self-acceptance is the second element in building confidence. We will not build confidence if we do not accept ourselves as we are. Of course, this does not mean that we do not have to work on ourselves - self-awareness of our strengths and weaknesses will also help us here. However, this means that we accept ourselves as a whole, despite the fact that we are working on the details. In addition, self-confidence comes not only from self-acceptance, but also from self-satisfaction, trust and self-confidence, as well as self-esteem and self-esteem. We can only develop self-confidence if we feel responsible for ourselves - taking responsibility for our lives in our own hands means that we can change what we want in this life.

One of the reasons for the lack of confidence, low self-esteem, or lack of motivation are limited beliefs. Inna is an internal critic. (inna to wewnetrzny krytyk?)

An internal critic is a voice in our head suggesting thoughts such as “you are lame”, “you have achieved nothing”, “you lost again”. Such formulations are hurting, blocking, undercutting the wings. What is worse, they are usually unjustified and unfair.

The Inner Critic is formed in early childhood. Then the years of unsupportive experiences in relationships make it grow stronger (frequent criticism, lack of unconditional love and full acceptance from parents or other people important to us in childhood, constant comparison).

A psychologist or psychotherapist is very helpful when working with an internal critic, because they help to look at our lives and thinking patterns from a different perspective. It is worth working independently on neutralizing our critic, using available techniques and methods. Here are some tips:

1. Get to know him

Think about whether his voice reminds you of someone. Perhaps one of the parents or guardians or a teacher. Realize if the opinion of these people is still so important to you. If compliance with it was beneficial in childhood, it does not mean that it still is. Remember that it is no longer the voice of a real person, but his image in your mind. Imagine him as a person, an animal or maybe an object. Draw, see how it looks.

Think about the situations in which he is most active. When his words become the most severe and best heard. What connects these circumstances?

- Think about the benefits of listening to an internal critic.

What does it give you, what needs does it meet, what does it protect against? How else could you take care of these needs. Think about the negative effects of his words. What does it help you in, and how does it hurt You can make a list of profits and losses.

- Start an internal dialogue with your inner critic.

Consider how much truth is in his words. When you hear, “You never succeed, you can say that you have succeeded many times.” Ask who thinks so and what evidence does he have. Pay attention to the key words: always, never,

again. Try to rationally, objectively assess the situation, do not give in to the words of an internal critic passively. Most likely, most of them are not real.

Consider which of his words may be useful to you, how to change them so that they are supportive.

- Build a distance to his words.

Imagine talking in a funny voice. Speed up or slow down his words. Experiment with tone, volume and expression. Criticism expressed in a cartoon voice will not be so overwhelming and it will be easier for you to discuss it.

If you imagined an internal critic as a person or painted him, try to change something in his appearance. Make him look funny, nice, grotesque. Put on funny clothes, paint a strange mustache or change the colors for more joyful.

- Be patient.

An internal critic has been with you for a long time. It will be difficult to change it right away. Give yourself time to learn more, discuss and negotiate. You need time and patience to change it step by step into a more positive form.

- Be assertive.

The topic of Assertiveness is worth paying more attention because it is extremely important in the whole process of building healthy self-confidence and shaping attitudes conducive to dealing with anxiety and stress.

Assertiveness is the ability to express one's opinion, feelings, attitudes in an open manner, within the limits of neither the rights nor the mental territory of other people or one's own. In other words, it is the ability to behave simultaneously with respect for oneself and for others, in a non-aggressive way, without causing suffering to others or one's own. An assertive person is guided by the motto: "Your rights and needs are as important as mine." No one is born assertive. It is an acquired skill that is built on the basis of relationships with other people. This term defies submission and aggression. A submissive man, due to low self-esteem or fear of rejection, gives up expressing his views and allows his rights to be violated. In turn, aggressive people are characterized by anger, anger or verbal attack.

Being assertive also means being able to accept and express criticism, praise and other opinions, and the ability to respond in a non-violent manner, including refusing. Assertive attitude usually accompanies people who have an image of themselves (who they are) adequate to reality, and therefore set realistic goals and largely use their capabilities. They do not undertake too difficult tasks, which means that they do not expose themselves to frustration and criticism of the environment.

An assertive person feels freely revealing himself (within reasonable limits) to others. He can build relationships honestly and directly without undue fear. Is also adequate awareness of its own strengths and weaknesses, so it is not dependent on momentary successes and failures. He can afford to make mistakes and trips, treating them as a lesson.

Building an assertive attitude is a process. Below are a few steps to facilitate this process.

- Analysis of situations in which it is difficult for us to remain in harmony with ourselves, our own values and feel the pressure to do something against ourselves.

Without knowing such situations, we don't know how to control them. Usually, everything happens quickly, and before we know it, we've probably already made a decision - but often not assertive. The worst thing you can do is try to act "intuitively" (read blindly).

2. Determining the benefits of assertive proceedings in the above situations.

Most often these are emotional benefits - greater self-confidence, self-respect, pride and so on. It is worth that you list the advantages that are most important to you in such proceedings. You need to get to know yourself best to

be able to make changes.

- Determine the behaviors you want.

If there are known situations in which it is difficult to behave assertively, and know the benefits of introducing changes, then the next stage should be to develop and plan such behaviors that will express an assertive attitude.

Building attitudes conducive to coping with anxiety and stressful situations as well as shaping healthy self-confidence is a complicated and long-lasting process. It depends on many different factors, as evidenced by the above study. Finally, it is worth noting that the use of relaxation techniques is important at every stage of the process. There are plenty of methods, and their effectiveness will depend on individual preferences.

One of them is the Sedona method, which is a technique of releasing emotions related to various aspects of our lives. It allows you to get rid of especially those painful, blocking feelings and emotions, but also blockades and beliefs that negatively affect our quality of life.

This method is special because of its ease of use. You can use it anywhere, anytime. It is based on the power of feelings and involves asking yourself a few questions. It is important to be open and mindful, which allows you to get rid of negative emotions and thoughts and replace them with positive and supportive ones.

The Sedona method consists of the following steps:

- Focus on what you feel at the moment. Accept this feeling fully, don't try to fight it. We are usually focused on the past or future, with little awareness of what is happening here and now. And the moment that lasts is the only time when we can change our thoughts and feelings. The more often you practice the technique of focusing on "here and now", the easier it will be to identify your feelings.

- Ask yourself: "Could I let this feeling go away?"

Answer this question intuitively, without thinking. It doesn't matter what your answer is. The negative feeling will be released anyway.

- Ask yourself: "Will I let it go?"

As before, answer without thinking and internal analysis of the situation. With this question you will confirm whether you are ready to "release" an unwanted feeling. If the answer is other than "yes", ask yourself if what you feel is what you want and need to feel.

- Ask yourself: "When?"

It is an encouragement for you to let the feeling leave here and now. It depends on you

you'll make a decision. Remember that if you decide at the moment that you will persist in this feeling, it is ok. It is your choice. You may want to use this method at another time.

- Repeat this process until you feel free / free of unwanted emotion.

Each time it will allow you to release unwanted, negative emotions and feelings with greater freedom and ease. It may be difficult at first, but over time the results will become more noticeable.