

CBT for Health anxiety



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Health Anxiety

- **Health anxiety** is worrying excessively that you are or may become seriously ill. This fear — rather than the physical symptom itself — results in severe distress that can be disabling. People with acute medical illnesses more likely to develop health anxiety than healthy people.
- **Health anxiety** tend to be acutely aware of bodily sensations that most people live with and ignore. To a **hypochondriac**, an upset stomach becomes a sign of cancer, and a headache can only mean a brain tumour. The stress that goes along with this worry can make the symptoms even worse.

Health Anxiety Symptoms:



- Preoccupation with a severe illness for at least six months.
- Misinterpreting common body symptoms and consumed with worries.
- Persistent fear of illness despite the reassurance of health status by health care providers.
- Difficulty maintaining a job, keeping relationships, and performing daily.

CBT Treatments

Formulation of the causes of the problems (i.e., specific thoughts and triggers, irrational beliefs and self-defeating behaviour):

- **Thoughts and triggers:** irrational or excessively negative thoughts about physical triggers.
- **Irrational beliefs:** Rigid and demanding beliefs; catastrophing; low discomfort tolerance; and self, other people and life condition deprecating.
- **Self-defeating behaviour:** Excessive checking, excessively asking for assurances, developing a dependency on other people.

Formulating recovery

- **Thoughts and triggers:** awareness of triggers; changing irrational and anxiety-provoking thoughts to rational ones (elegant change).
- **Rational beliefs:** reformulating irrational beliefs to rational one and reinforcing them into the person concise mind.

Formulating recovery

Rational beliefs are made of the following factors:

- Flexible beliefs
 - Acceptance
 - Anti-catastrophing
 - Compassion
 - Tolerance
 - **FAACT**
 - (elegant change)
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- **Self-helping behaviour:** Replacing self-defeating behaviour with self-helping behaviour. Examples: reducing health checking; self-assuring; not checking with Dr Google, etc. (elegant change if done on its own).

Resources



Reading for the patients:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/health-anxiety>

Thank You - Any questions?

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