WHAT?

Anxiety is the normal and common feeling of worry, apprehension, fear and/or panic in response to situations which seem overwhelming, threatening, unsafe or uncomfortable. It helps one study harder for an exam, keep focused on a presentation and deal with a tense situation in the office.

But when anxiety becomes so severe and prolonged that they interfere with our ability to cope with day-to-day situations, it has become a disabling disorder. There are many types of anxiety disorders. They include:
1. Panic Disorder
2. Social Phobia
3. Post-Traumatic Stress disorder
4. Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder
5. Generalized Anxiety Disorder

The Mrs Wong Kwok Leong Student Wellness Centre offers individual counselling as well as information about, and referral to other campus and community resources. For more information or to schedule an appointment, feel free to contact us at 6828-0786. All appointments are strictly confidential and are free of charge for all matriculated SMU students.

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Sources:
http://www.silverribbon singapore.com/about.php
http://www.singaporepsychiatry.org.sg/health.htm
http://www.helpguide.org/mental/anxiety_self_help.htm
Panic Disorder
A common anxiety disorder in which the person experiences a panic attack and has persistent concerns about having additional panic attacks. It usually starts abruptly and rapidly builds to a peak. The entire episode may last for more than half an hour.

Social Phobia
A marked and persistent fear of a social situation or a performance in which embarrassment is considered to be a likely outcome. There is acute anxiety whenever the feared situation or performance is anticipated or encountered and they frequently avoid these situations.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
An anxiety disorder that can develop after exposure to an extreme traumatic event. In addition, they are recurrent, intrusive recollections of the events which are anxiety-provoking and distressing to the person. The person will likely be constantly avoiding aspects associated with the trauma and have numbing of general responsiveness which are not present before the trauma.

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
An obsession is defined as persistent ideas, thoughts, impulses or images which are intrusive, anxiety-provoking and distressing. A compulsion is a ritualistic behaviour which is intended to modify or reduce the anxiety through activity or behavior. Sufferers of OCD are bothered by repeated thoughts or behaviour that appears senseless, even to them. These recurrent obsessions and compulsions are time-consuming and may impair normal life activities.

Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD)
Diagnosed when a person worries excessively about a variety of everyday problems for at least six months. The anxiety is perceived by the individual as being difficult to control or regulate, even though they usually realize that their anxiety is more intense than the situation warrants.

TREATMENTS

Medication
Although it cannot cure anxiety disorders, medication can keep the physical symptoms under control as the person undergoes psychotherapy. The principal medications used are anti-depressants, anti-anxiety drugs and beta-blockers.

Psychotherapy
This involves talking with a trained mental health professional, who can be psychiatrist, psychologist, social worker or counsellor to find out what caused an anxiety disorder and discover the ways to deal with its symptoms. Two common therapies are Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and Exposure Therapy. CBT aims to change the thinking patterns that support the fears and also the reaction to anxiety-provoking situations. Exposure Therapy allows you to confront your fears in a safe, controlled environment. As you face your fear without being harmed, your anxiety gradually diminishes.