- Thus, problems with these nerve cell pathways and/ or messengers may result in "faulty" connections, and subsequently GAD.
- Genetics
- Family history may increase the likelihood of the disorder
- Environmental factors
- Trauma
- Stressful event
- Substance withdrawal

DIAGNOSIS

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th edition (DSM-5) defines the diagnosis for mental health professionals as:
For children, the anxiety and worry are associated with fewer (one or more) of the six symptoms compared to adults (three or more).
The process may entail:

- Medical and psychiatric history
- A physical examination and lab tests to rule out other causes of the symtoms
- Reports on the intensity and time-frame of the symptoms
- Evaluation of the degree of the dysfunction

MANAGEMENT

GAD is usually managed through medication and cognitive-behavioural therapy, addressing both physical and emotional symptoms

COGNITIVE-BEHAVIOURAL THERAPY

- Learning more about the condition
- Changes in thought and behavioural patterns
- Relaxation techniques

MEDICATION

- Short-term sedative hypnotics
- Certain anti-depressants (SSRI's & SNRI's)
- Anti-anxiety medication
- Other ranges of medication may also play a role, including pregabalin and agomelatine

ADDITIONAL MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

- Exercise and a healthy diet
- Avoiding or reducing caffeine, nicotine and alcohol
- Adequate sleep
- A support structure

Please Note: This is an educational information leaflet only and should not be used for diagnosis. For more information on anxiety disorder and mental illness, consult your healthcare professional.

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THE SOUTH AFRICAN DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY GROUP

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ANXIETY DISORDER

THERE ARE FIVE MAJOR ANXIETY DISORDERS

1. Generalised anxiety disorder
2. Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)
3. Panic disorder
4. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
5. Social phobia (or social anxiety disorder)

This brochure is based on generalised anxiety disorder (GAD).

WHAT IS GAD?

A sufferer typically:

- Experiences relentless and exaggerated anxiety in the absence of valid concerns, which can be debilitating
- Is prone to always expect the worst
- Blows things out of proportion
- Grapples with all-consuming fear and dread to the point of it interfering with their ability to live a normal life

COMMON SYMPTOMS OF GAD (GENERAL ANXIETY DISORDER)?

- Headaches
- Constant worry
- Difficulty sleeping
- Exaggerated worry
- Muscle tension
- Easily startled

PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

- Dizziness/immobility
- Headaches
- Difficulty with concentration
- Sweating
- Chest pain
- Heart palpitations
- Nausea
- Diarrhoea
- Rapid breathing or breathlessness
- Increased blood pressure
- Muscle tension
- Frequent urination
- Tiredness or fatigue
- Change in sleep patterns
- Trembling

EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS:

- Excessive worrying
- Irritability or agitation
- Restlessness
- Feeling tense or highly strung
- Being on edge

The above illustrates that GAD cannot be ignored or dismissed as a "mental issue". Rather, it can be crippling and presents immense challenges to an individual's general health and physical wellbeing.

DEPRESSION VERSUS ANXIETY

Although depression and anxiety differ considerably, there are some commonalities, such as:

- Restlessness
- Excessive worrying
- Agitation

NORMAL STRESS IN COMPARISON TO GAD

Normal anxiety	GAD
Worrying about specific events	Chronic and irrational worry
Controlled anxiety	Irrepressible anxiety
Worries may be unpleasant, but do not cause significant distress	Worries cause extreme distress

THE PROBLEM GOES BEYOND GAD

Those with GAD may, in addition, also experience one or more of the following:

- Irrational fears
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder
- Clinical depression
- Addiction problems (drugs, alcohol)
- Generalised panic disorder
- Burnout

CAUSES

The exact cause has not yet been established. However, experts agree that several factors may play a role, such as:

- The incorrect functioning of certain nerve cell pathways, particulary those that are involved with emotions and thinking.
- These pathways depend on messengers, called neurotransmitters, to connect.