

Anxiety

Your Body's
Fire Alarm

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Who is this booklet for?

This booklet is for anyone who wants to understand what **anxiety** is, why it happens, how to recognize when it is “out of balance,” and what can be done to manage it.

Anxiety:

Your Body's Fire Alarm

Think of anxiety as a **fire alarm** installed inside your body. Imagine that this alarm has a very important function: it stays **“on duty”** to detect when something might be wrong, when there is imminent danger, and sounds an alarm to warn you. This warning serves to protect you, saying:



WARNING

SOMETHING
NEEDS
YOUR **ATTENTION**
NOW!

WARNING

That way, you can act quickly, escape the danger, or prepare to face a difficult situation.

For example,

If you're walking down a dark street and hear a strange noise, this "alarm" goes off, making your heart beat faster, your breathing quicken, and your mind more alert. This helps you be prepared to defend yourself or get out of there. In this sense, anxiety is a valuable ally that keeps you safe.



But imagine that this alarm starts going off even when there's no fire, **even when you're in a safe place**, like at home or at work. Or that it rings so loudly and for so long that you can no longer pay attention to what's around you. This **“broken alarm”** makes you feel constantly worried, afraid for no reason, and even tired from being on high alert.



When this happens, **anxiety ceases to be helpful and becomes a problem** because it interferes with your concentration, your sleep, your relationships, and your well-being.



When the alarm is broken:

Anxiety disorders

As we've seen, the anxiety alarm is very important for protecting us. But sometimes, it starts to malfunction:



Anxiety disorders are situations in which anxiety ceases to be merely a useful signal and becomes a problem that disrupts a person's life. The "broken" alarm can cause intense fear, constant worry, panic attacks, specific fears, and other symptoms that make daily life difficult.

These disorders are common and can affect anyone.

Levels of anxiety severity:

How loud is your alarm?

Remember the fire alarm inside your body? It can sound in different ways, depending on what's happening. Let's imagine how this alarm might work at three volume levels: **low, medium, and high.**



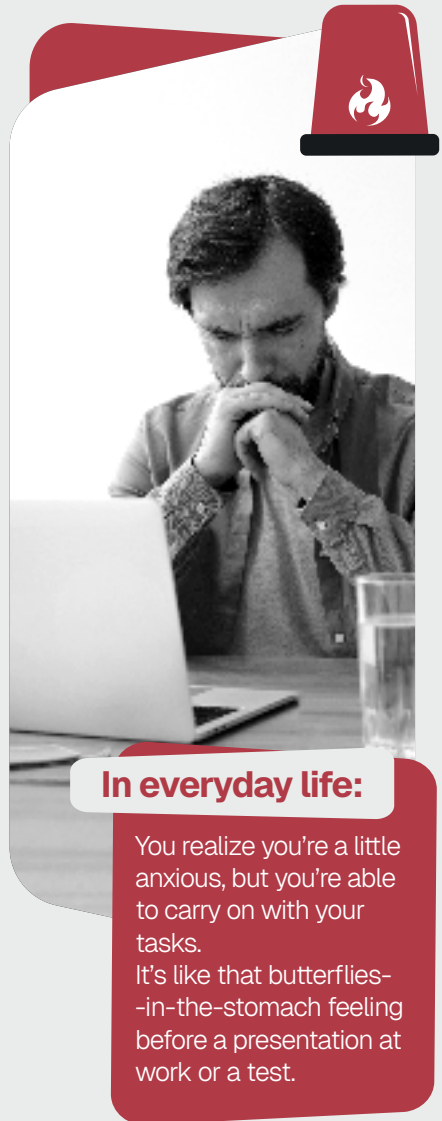
Mild anxiety:

The alarm at low volume

When the alarm sounds at a low volume, it gently catches your attention. It's like a quiet warning that says, **“Stay alert, something might be happening.”** This soft sound might make you feel a little nervous or worried, but without disrupting what you're doing.

Meet Roger:

Roger hears his alarm ring softly before an important meeting. He feels a little nervous, but manages to present his work well and feels better once he starts speaking.



In everyday life:

You realize you're a little anxious, but you're able to carry on with your tasks. It's like that butterflies-in-the-stomach feeling before a presentation at work or a test.

Moderate anxiety:

The alarm getting louder

Here, the alarm starts ringing louder and more frequently, making it hard to ignore. It becomes persistent, making you feel tense, worried, and on edge for long periods



In everyday life:

Simple tasks become more difficult. You may start avoiding situations that set off the alarm.

Meet Mariana:

Mariana notices that her alarm rings loudly whenever she has to speak in public. Before meetings at work, her heart races, her hands start to sweat, and her breathing quickens. These signs make her so nervous that it's hard to even think about what she's going to say. This anxiety doesn't go away even after the meeting starts; on the contrary, she feels like the "alarm" won't stop ringing, and this makes her voice tremble and makes it hard for her to concentrate. Out of fear of embarrassing herself or being judged, Mariana started avoiding meetings whenever possible, even though she really wanted to participate and share her ideas.

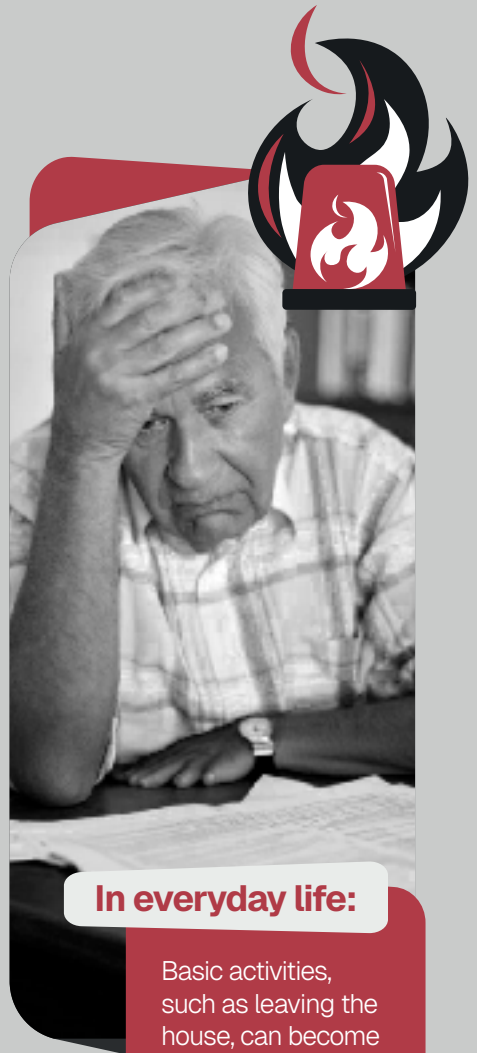
Severe anxiety:

The alarm going off nonstop

When the alarm is broken, it goes off loudly all the time, even when there is no real danger. This loud, constant noise causes great distress and makes it difficult for you to perform even the simplest tasks.

Meet Carlos:

Carlos always used public transportation to get to work and never had any problems with it. But one day, while on the bus, he witnessed a robbery. The shock was immense, and during the commotion, he had an intense panic attack: his heart raced, his breathing became difficult,



In everyday life:

Basic activities, such as leaving the house, can become impossible. You may experience panic, shortness of breath, tremors, and intense fear.

and he felt extreme fear, as if his life were in danger. Ever since then, every time he thinks about getting on a bus or any form of public transportation, his “internal alarm” goes off at full volume. He feels his heart racing, his chest tightening, and a fear so intense that it seems uncontrollable. This fear causes Carlos to avoid leaving the house alone, for fear that another panic attack might occur. He has come to rely on friends and family to accompany him on simple errands, such as going to the grocery store or the bank. This loud, constant alarm makes Carlos feel trapped and isolated.



What to Avoid and What to Do

When the anxiety alarm is ringing louder than it should, some actions can help, while others can make things even worse.

What to Avoid

Don't blame yourself: feeling anxious isn't a sign of weakness, but rather a bodily response that can be adjusted.

Don't ignore the signs: trying to “sweep it under the rug” can make the problem worse.

Don't isolate yourself: being alone can increase your distress. Try to stay in touch with people who are a source of support for you.

What to do

Maintain a healthy routine: regular sleep, a balanced diet, and physical activity help keep your body and mind more stable.

Talk about how you feel: sharing your concerns with people you trust can bring relief and support.

Seek reliable information: learning more about anxiety is an important step toward managing it better.

In addition to this booklet, there are other resources that can help you better understand anxiety and find strategies to cope with it.



Point your camera
or click [HERE](#)

When to seek help?

If your alarm is going off and disrupting your life, it's important to seek **professional support**.

The sooner you seek support, the faster you can learn to manage your anxiety and regain your **quality of life**.

If you feel you can't cope on your own, **don't wait**: visit a primary care clinic, a psychologist, or a doctor you trust. In cases of severe crisis, seek **immediate care** at a health facility.



Where to seek help

UBS (Basic Health Unit): This is the gateway to healthcare. There, you can be seen by doctors, nurses, and psychologists, who will listen to your concerns, provide guidance, and refer you to other services if necessary.

Teaching Clinic: These are clinics affiliated with universities, where students in health-related programs, supervised by faculty, provide free or low-cost care. To find one, contact the universities in your city directly for information on hours and how to schedule an appointment.

CAPS (Psychosocial Care Center): This is a specialized service for people who need more intensive mental health care.

CRAS (Social Assistance Reference Center): A public service that supports families in socially vulnerable situations. There, you can ask for guidance and be referred to other health and social assistance services, if necessary.

Psychologists offering services at a reduced rate: Some professionals offer consultations at a reduced price. You can find these professionals on social media or online psychotherapy platforms.

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