

Do You Know the Signs of an Anxiety Disorder?

According to recent studies, anxiety disorders cost the United States \$46.6 billion in 1990, nearly one-third of the nation's total mental health bill of \$147 billion. We are not referring to dollars spent on effective treatments, but rather to the costs of worker absenteeism, job loss and alcohol/substance abuse.

People can help themselves by recognizing the signs of anxiety disorder. These can include:

- Endless checking or rechecking actions.
- A constant and unrealistic worry about everyday occurrences and activities.
- Fear and anxiety that appear for no apparent reason.

"People need to talk about what's bothering them," said Dr. Cantor. "Anxiety often comes about when people hold in their fears until they begin to feel anxiety. People shouldn't wait until they're paralyzed with anxiety before they seek some kind of consultation.

"They should talk with friends and loved ones about their feelings. If problems remain, they should talk to someone who can help. People shouldn't be ashamed of what they're feeling. We all experience a wide range of feelings and there is no shame in talking about them."

Anxiety disorders include the following:

- panic disorder: a sudden, uncontrollable attack of terror that can manifest itself with heart palpitations, dizziness, shortness of breath, and an out of control or terribly frightening feeling;
- generalized anxiety disorder: excessive anxiety and worry that last for at least six months accompanied by other physical and behavioral problems;
- social phobia: a persistent fear of one or more situations in which the person is exposed to possible scrutiny of others;
- obsessive compulsive disorder: repeated, intrusive and unwanted thoughts that cause anxiety, often accompanied by ritualized behavior that relieve this anxiety;
- Post-traumatic stress disorder: caused when someone experiences a severely distressing or traumatic event. Recurring nightmares and/or flashbacks and unprovoked anger are common symptoms.

By contacting a psychologist, those who suffer from an anxiety disorder can take the first step on the road to recovery. According to the National Institutes of Mental Health, 90 percent of people with emotional illnesses will improve or recover if they get treatment.

To locate the nearest screening site for Anxiety Disorders Screening Day, call 1-800-442-2020. You will be asked to enter your zip code into the telephone and you will be provided with the name and number of the nearest screening site.

There are experienced psychologists who can help you learn to deal with your or your child's psychological needs. Call 1-800-964-2000 to be connected with a state psychological referral service which can help you find a psychologist in your local area. Psychologists are bound by strict codes of ethics and laws to keep all information confidential.