

ANXIETY & ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY

With economic uncertainty individuals are experiencing heightened anxiety about money, stocks, jobs, mortgage and credit card payments, student tuition and shrinking retirement savings and home equity.

During economic uncertainty more people report fatigue, feelings of irritability or anger, and lying awake at night as a result of stress. Other symptoms include lack of interest or motivation, feeling depressed or sad, headaches and muscular tension. Almost half report unhealthy behaviours to manage stress- overeating or eating unhealthy foods, shopping, napping, excessive drinking, or smoking.

Women & Financial Stress

According to the American Psychological Association's National Stress in America Survey, women bear the brunt of financial stress. More women than men report being more stressed about money, the economy, job stability and housing costs.

While all are affected, women over 44 years of age are most likely to report that the economy is a significant stressor. Women in general say they are more worried about money than their personal health.

Dealing With Uncertainty

Dealing with uncertainty is an unavoidable part of daily life. As we cannot see the future, we can never be certain what exactly is going to happen day to day. Anxious people will often try to plan and prepare for everything as a way of avoiding or eliminating uncertainty. Some of their behaviours include- seeking excessive reassurance from others, list-making, double checking, refusing to delegate tasks to others, procrastination, avoidance, or distraction.

Learning to cope with and manage the anxiety of uncertainty takes a lot of hard work. It is a lifelong process. During times of extreme stress and uncertainty, people fall back on old behaviours - this is normal.



How to Manage the Anxiety of Uncertainty

- **Learn about anxiety.** Understand what is happening to you. Recognize that anxiety is normal and adaptive, but can become a problem when our body reacts as if there were real danger.
- **Practise relaxation.** Relaxation techniques include- breathing calmly, taking slow and gentle breaths, and progressive muscle relaxation where you alternately tense and relax muscles starting with your toes.

- **Challenge anxious thoughts.** When anxious, we see the world as threatening and dangerous. Try to reframe your thoughts in a clear and more objective way, without being overly negative or focusing only on the bad.
- **Face your uncertainty.** When dealing with financial uncertainty we need to plan or the fears and stresses can overwhelm us, leading to anxiety or depression.

Be proactive about financial planning. Create a budget, balance your cheque book, and evaluate your finances. Remember that you may not be able to control the economy but you can change how you handle your own life and finances.

- **Act as if you are tolerant of uncertainty.** Fake it until you make it is a way to become more tolerant of uncertainty. If you can change your behaviour, eventually this will help you to change your thoughts and feelings.
- **Avoid isolation.** Do not allow your anxiety about finances to hurt your relationships. If you have been avoiding certain people, situations or places out of anxiety, start exposing yourself to something that is not too frightening and then work up to the things that cause greater anxiety.
- **Seek professional help.**

If you are feeling better, celebrate but continue to regularly work on managing your anxiety.

According to Statistics Canada's **Community Health Survey of Mental Health & Wellness:**

- anxiety disorders are the most common mental health problems in Canada
- people suffering from an anxiety disorder are subject to intense, prolonged feelings of fright & distress
- their continuous unease and fear can interfere with their relationships with family, friends & colleagues
- anxiety disorders affect behaviour, thoughts, emotions & health.
- it is common for people to suffer from more than one anxiety disorder & for it to be accompanied by depression, eating disorders or substance abuse
- anxiety disorders can also coexist with physical disorders.



What if the Anxiety Continues Unabated?

There are two main approaches to treating anxiety disorders- drug therapy and cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT). Support groups and educational resources can also be important.

If you feel you need some help, contact you EFAP.

**For confidential assistance
Brown Crawshaw 1.800.668.2055
www.browncrawshaw.com**