**What is Anxiety?**

Anxiety is basically worry that never stops. Its symptoms can be severe or mild, and include emotional, physical, and/or psychological manifestations. Here are some of the symptoms and possible causes of anxiety.

**Symptoms and Manifestations**

*-Abdominal Problems*

Anxiety can cause pain in your abdomen. Anxiety can also cause nausea, vomiting, and/or diarrhea. Have you ever had "butterflies in your stomach"? This refers to the fluttery feeling you get in your middle when you're nervous. This is caused by the "flight or fight" response, during which the body decreases circulation to non-vital body processes such as digestion.

This allows your body to go into full alert, able to run or fight as the case may be. When this is prolonged, however, the digestive organs become worn out and, without the return of normal circulation, begin to malfunction.

*-Muscle Tension*

This can cause pain throughout the body, the most frightening being the chest tightness in a "panic attack." (Panic attacks are also symptoms of anxiety.) The muscle spasms can feel like you're choking or like a heart attack, increasing feelings of fear and anxiety.

-*Phobias*

Phobias are irrational fears of harmless or specific things. Fear of heights, spiders, or flying in airplanes are some of the more common phobias.

-Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

People with OCD feel the need to enact some sort of ritual to alleviate anxious feelings. Probably the most well-known example is obsessive hand-washing, but OCD can also involve other ritualistic behavior, such as checking all the doors and windows multiple times to see that they are locked, even when you just locked them.

-*Headaches*

Probably a result of muscle tension or chemical imbalance in the brain, headaches often are part of anxiety.

*-Heart Palpitations*

This is when the heart seems to flutter or beat rapidly and irregularly. Like the butterflies in the stomach, heart palpitations are part of the fight or flight response, only in the case of anxiety it's chronic.

*-Restlessness/Insomnia*

People with anxiety often have trouble relaxing in general and sleeping in particular.

**Causes of Anxiety**

-*Genetics*

There is evidence to suggest that the tendency to develop anxiety can be inherited. This genetic tendency may need an environmental trigger of some sort to develop actual anxiety symptoms.

-*Traumatic Event(s)*

Veterans of wars, survivors of rape and/or sexual abuse, and other victims of traumatic experience can suffer from anxiety. It's as though the brain can not "move on" from the event, creating patterns of anxious thoughts and physical symptoms.

*-Brain Chemicals*

Those who suffer from anxiety tend to have abnormal levels of neurotransmitters, which means their brains have trouble transmitting information on a cellular level.