

Anxiety: the myths vs. the facts

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ENGL 1121: College Writing and Critical Reading

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November 6, 2023

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Anxiety is something that one must live with when they begin to suffer from it. It becomes a part of you. Like your built-in enemy. It may not show up every day, but it's always lingering around. Many people in today's society believe that anxiety is just a joke. There are some people who believe that it isn't a real condition, and for those who do believe it's a real condition think that it can just go away on its own, or that it's not a common condition, or that it's the same as being shy. Some people even believe that medication is the only way to help manage anxiety. Living amongst someone who suffers with anxiety, I can say that these things are most definitely not true. I have seen firsthand that anxiety is a real illness and that it doesn't just go away on its own. I've also seen how serious and common anxiety is. As far as social anxiety goes, it's also important to know that it's not the same thing as being shy. Doing research for this essay, I have also learned that social anxiety, or social phobia, is the not the same as being shy. There is a huge difference between the two that not many people understand. I have also seen that medication is most definitely not the only way to help manage it. Some people need more than just medication.

Many people believe anxiety isn't a real illness. Some people say that it's just stress when in reality it's not. Anyone can experience anxiety at any point in their lives. It may be something that was passed on to them from a previous relative or it could be caused by the environment around you. In the article "Anxiety facts: all you need to know" from *Psych Central* Kate Bettino (2021) says that "anxiety is a learned coping mechanism" and that genetics, the environment, preexisting condition, and social factors can all also be a cause of anxiety. Bettino (2021) also states that more than 31% of people in the U.S. can experience an anxiety disorder at some point in their lives. This article shows that anxiety is a real illness by discussing the causes of it. It also

shows that anyone can be affected by an anxiety disorder at any point in their life, whether it's caused by genetics, the environment, preexisting conditions, or social factors. In another article called "what to know about anxiety" from *Medical News Today* reviewed by Bethany Juby (2023), it says that "anxiety disorders form a category of mental health diagnoses that lead to excessive nervousness, fear, apprehension, and worry." This article also helps show that anxiety is a real disorder by defining it and discussing the possible effects of anxiety disorders.

A lot of people think anxiety can just go away on its own, but it's not that easy. Anxiety disorders are not curable, which means they can't exactly just go away on their own in all cases. In the article "Nine common myths about anxiety" from *The Recovery Village* Megan Hull (2023) says that someone with an anxiety disorder can experience periods of time when their symptoms reduce, but that doesn't necessarily mean that they have gone away. Hull says that due to this, it can feel like the anxiety symptoms have been "cured." She states the fact that "symptoms of anxiety are persistent and usually require treatment to subside." This article shows that anxiety isn't a disorder that can go away or be "cured" easily. Managing anxiety takes time and it doesn't always just "goes away." You may be able to get your symptoms to subside a little bit with the help of medications or therapy, but an anxiety disorder is something that stays with you whether you like it or not.

Anxiety disorders are a lot more common than some may think. Many people have anxiety disorders, but they are not always noticeable. In the article "What are anxiety disorders?" from *American Psychiatric Association* reviewed by Philip Muskin (2023), it says that "anxiety disorders are the most common of mental disorders." It also says that anxiety disorders can affect around 30% of adults some point in their lives which relates to what Kate Bettino (2021) said in her article. This article shows that although anxiety may not seem common, it is. Due to the

statistic about 30% of adults having anxiety disorders at some point in their lives, it not only shows this, but it allows us to see how common anxiety disorders really are. Someone in your family probably already has an anxiety disorder and you probably just can't see it because anxiety isn't always that noticeable.

Social anxiety, or social phobia, is another type of anxiety. But it is not the same as being shy like most people may think. Social anxiety is when someone has excessive fear of social situations. In the article "Anxiety facts: all you need to know" from *Psych Central* Kate Bettino (2021) also briefly talks about social anxiety. She says that it is "one of the most common types of anxiety disorders." She also says that this disorder can happen in adults, but it's more common to develop in one's childhood. She also states that "people with social anxiety disorder have anxiety in social situations and worry that their behaviors will be judged negatively by others." This article shows that not only is social phobia a more common type of anxiety, it also shows that it is not the same thing as being shy. Being shy is more of a personality trait rather than a disorder. Everyone is shy, but not everyone has social anxiety. In the article "10 types of anxiety disorders" from *The Diamond Luxury Rehab in Thailand* Ahmed Zayed discusses the different types of anxiety disorders that people can have. Some include obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), generalized anxiety disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), separation anxiety, and many more. One anxiety disorder that is discussed in the article is social anxiety. He says that "social anxiety disorder, or social phobia, is a mental condition indicated by an overwhelming fear of social situations. A person with social anxiety disorder fears they will be criticized, judged, embarrassed, or humiliated in social situations such as public speaking." He also says that possible causes of social anxiety can include "genetics, changes in brain structure, and environment." This also shows that social anxiety is not the same thing as being shy. The

article justifies that social phobia is a real anxiety disorder by not only discussing what it is, but also by discussing possible causes.

There are so many people who believe that medication is the only way to help manage anxiety, but that is not true. There are multiple ways anxiety can be managed. In the article “Nine common myths about anxiety” from *The Recovery Village* Megan Hull (2023) discusses the many ways anxiety disorders can be treated. Hull states that “there are many different types of anxiety disorders, [...]. In the same way, there are many different treatment options available for people experiencing anxiety.” Hull then discusses the different treatment options, which include meditation and relaxation techniques, cognitive behavioral therapy, individual or group-based therapy, exercise, and problem-solving strategies. This article shows that there is more than just one treatment for anxiety disorders. Hull didn’t even bring up medication in her list of possible treatments which elaborates more on the facts that medication is not the only treatment for anxiety.

Some people think that it’s obvious when someone has an anxiety disorder, but that’s actually not true in most cases. In the article “Nine common myths about anxiety” from *The Recovery Village* Megan Hull (2023) says that “anxiety disorders aren’t always noticeable.” Hull says that it can be hard to notice if someone has an anxiety disorder due to someone feeling embarrassed or ashamed of their symptoms that are caused from their anxiety. This shows that anxiety really isn’t that noticeable. You may be around many people throughout a normal day who have anxiety disorders, but you just don’t know because they are trying so hard to cloak they’re symptoms. By hiding their symptoms, it could be causing them more anxiety just by having to try so hard to keep their symptoms at a low and worrying if they’ll show or not.

When it comes to people's idea of anxiety, it isn't always easy. Especially for the people who have anxiety disorders having to deal with people saying that it'll just go away or that it doesn't seem like they have it. Or even that tell that if they just get some medication or avoid social settings that they'll be fine. Anxiety is a real illness and is very common. It's not something to joke about or to make assumptions about. Something big that I have learned from this essay is that anxiety never just goes away. My mom suffers from anxiety and after reading what the different types are, it seems to me like she suffers from more than one type. When she has anxiety attacks, I always just assume that her anxiety will just go away or if she takes her medication that it will help, but after writing this essay and doing all this research, I have learned that this is not the case. I've learned that anxiety comes but never goes. I've learned that medication doesn't always solve the problem, but now I know how to help her better next time when she has an anxiety attack. I could try exercising with her, or meditating, there's such a big variety of management options that I could choose from to help her and that's something I'm glad I could learn from writing this essay. Anxiety may be like a built-in enemy, but learning how to make it your built-in friend is even better. Learning ways to help manage it and keep it under control or from getting bad, gives YOU the control over it, not the other way around.

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