

# ANXIETY

Anxiety is your physical, mental and emotional response to feeling afraid.

Physical symptoms may include a tight chest, breathlessness, shallow breathing, aching tense limbs, clenched jaw, tight neck muscles, headaches, ticks and twitches, sleeplessness, feeling a frog in your throat, palpitations, light-headedness, nausea and more.

Emotional symptoms may include feeling afraid, feelings of dread, tearful, sadness, feeling trapped, feeling suffocated, feeling alone, feeling like you are sinking, feeling ghostly, not feeling yourself, feeling incompetent, feeling loss of confidence and more.

Mental responses may include negative thinking, worst case scenario thinking, over planning for what ifs, circular thinking, rigid thinking, personalisation, generalisation, black and white thinking, mind reading, paranoid thinking, making assumptions, emotional reasoning, magnification, minimisation and more.

When we feel fear, our internal alarm in our brains goes off to let us know that we are in danger. When this alarm goes off we will experience a number of physical changes in order to deal with the perceived danger.

This internal alarm in our brain instinctively goes off and is there to protect us, just like a sophisticated house alarm. This alarm system results in doors shutting down, sound alarms going off, traps being activated, guns being shot (as I said, it's pretty sophisticated).

What happens when the alarm malfunctions and starts to go off whenever there is a whisper in the wind. You have to reset the alarm.

In the same way our internal alarm system which prepares the body to attack or run away (the fight or flight response) can malfunction and may need resetting.

## **When do our internal alarm systems go off?**

Our internal alarm system goes off when we feel afraid. But our alarm system, much like the house alarm system, is designed to help us get ready to fight off an intruder, or to run away from one. This is what it's designed for, but most of us have alarms going off when we cannot cope with life.

So, if we have been under a lot of stress, experienced a trauma, gone through an illness, experienced loss, lost a job, been attacked, been abused and so on – our alarm system will go off!

The alarm is there to alert us to the fact we need a rest, we need to talk, we need to rethink what we are doing, we need to build resilience, we need support. But usually we ignore the alarm or have no idea how to switch the alarm off, and so we may battle on like a stiff upper lipped Victorian. And just like a house alarm if our internal alarms go off too often and become worn out, they can malfunction.

Once there is malfunction we need to reset. Counselling and psychotherapy can help reset your alarm system.

BOOK an appointment with Farah to address your Anxiety.