

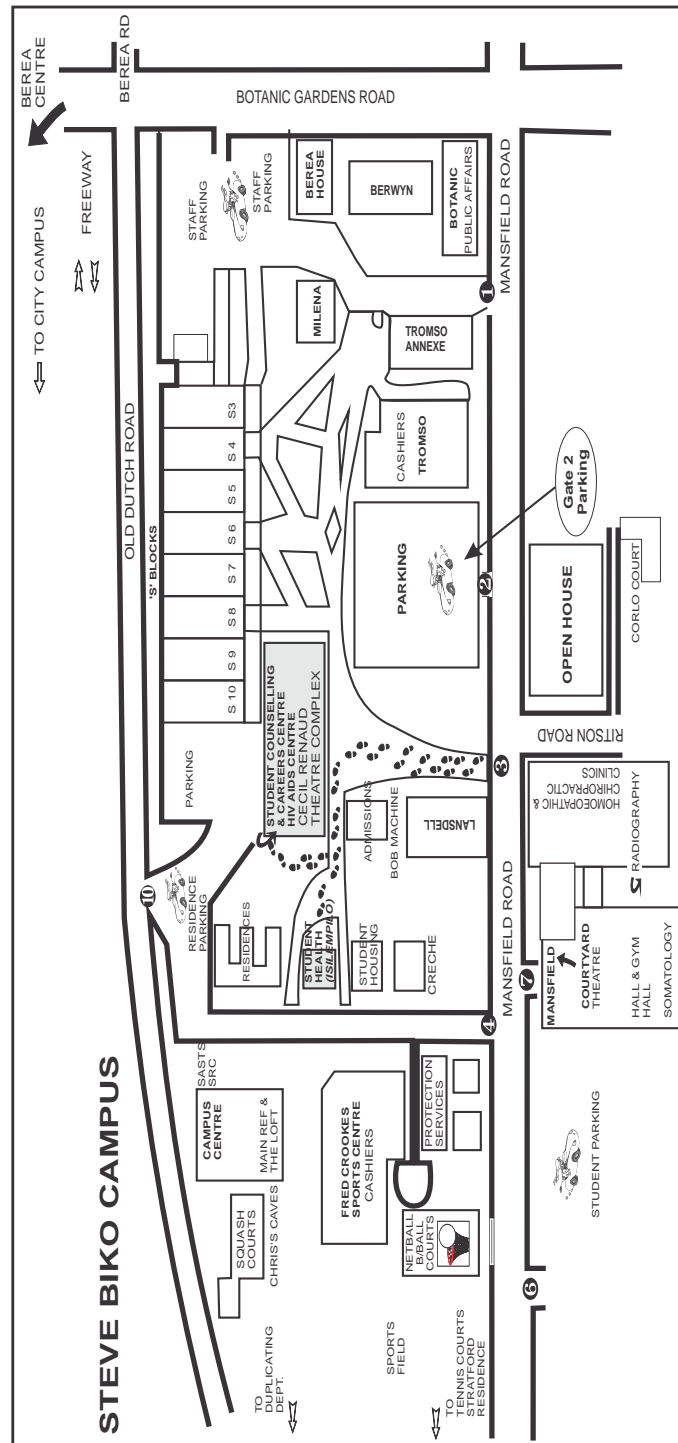
demand your immediate attention but don't lose sight of the bigger picture. Always plan and keep things in perspective.

- Set realistic goals for yourself that you are motivated to and reasonably able to fulfil.
- Draw on support from those around you that are like-minded. Be open about your struggles with people that you can trust. There are some things in which only you can help yourself, but it is helpful to share your burden with others. We all need a support system.
- Don't look for short term quick fixes-these often ultimately exacerbate your stress levels
- Seek professional help (from a medical doctor or psychologist) if you have been unable to overcome anxiety on your own and especially if your functioning has become severely debilitated by your anxiety.

It can be very helpful to get an objective perspective and guidance to help you develop solutions. This is especially true in the case of anxiety caused by a traumatic event such as a death or personal trauma.

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Identifying & Managing Anxiety



What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a feeling or state of intense worry, fear or dread. Everybody experiences it when faced with a stressful situation, for example before an exam or an interview, or during a trying time such as illness. It is normal to feel anxious when facing something difficult or dangerous, and mild anxiety can be a positive and useful experience. However anxiety can interfere with normal life. Excessive anxiety is also often associated with depression. Anxiety is considered abnormal when:

- it is very prolonged or severe
- it happens in the absence of a stressful event
- it interferes with everyday activities such as studying, going to work or socialising

Symptoms of anxiety

The physical symptoms of anxiety are caused by the brain sending messages to parts of the body to prepare for the "fight or flight" response. The heart, lungs and other parts of the body work faster. The brain also releases stress hormones, like adrenaline. The following symptoms can occur as a result:

Physical symptoms:

- abdominal discomfort
- diarrhoea
- dry mouth
- rapid heartbeat or palpitations
- tightness or pain in chest
- shortness of breath
- dizziness
- frequent urination
- difficulty swallowing

Psychological symptoms:

- insomnia
- irritability or anger
- inability to concentrate
- fear of madness
- feeling unreal and not in control of your actions (depersonalisation)

What causes anxiety?

Internal factors

- Personality
- Poor time management
- Lack of goal directed behaviour
- Learning difficulty
- Unresolved conflict

External factors

- Work overload
- Unrealistic expectations of others
- Family/relational problems
- Financial difficulties
- Illness
- Death of a loved one
- A traumatic experience

Common Types of anxiety

Acute stress reaction - acute means the symptoms develop quickly, minutes or hours after the stressful event. This type of reaction typically occurs after an unexpected life crisis such as death of a loved one. Sometimes symptoms occur before a forthcoming event, such as an important exam. This is called situational anxiety. Symptoms usually settle fairly

quickly and no treatment may be needed.

Adjustment reaction - This is similar to acute stress reaction, but symptoms develop over days or weeks after a stressful situation, for example as a reaction to a divorce or any significant life change. Symptoms tend to improve over a few weeks or so.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) - this may follow after experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event such as a major accident or violent crime. Anxiety is only one of the symptoms, which may come and go. The person may re-live their traumatic experience in dreams or flashbacks. It is normal to react with anxiety to a frightening experience - the term PTSD is only applied if symptoms persist. It may start years after the triggering event.

How can you manage anxiety?

- Identify the source- is it something you can/should solve? If it is outside your control you might need to change the way you think about the situation or get help in coping with it.
- Change your behaviour- Once you have recognised what you need to change you then need to commit to doing things differently. Changing behavior can be difficult so you must persevere.
- Live a balanced lifestyle- Prioritise time to relax and rest, to exercise and to spend time with close and supportive friends/family. Give yourself time-out from the demands of life. Give more time to the things that are most important. There are some things that