

Anxiety & Neurofeedback

Anxiety in the U.S. is conservatively estimated as affecting 18% of adults between the ages of 18-54 – 40 million people – according to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). Other estimates put the number much higher, around 30% of people, because many never seek help, or are misdiagnosed, or don't know they have anxiety issues. It also has been estimated that anxiety disorders are about one-third of the entire mental health bill in the U.S., with its share being \$42 billion (out of a total \$148 billion). Anxiety has become the number one mental health issue in North America.

Types of anxiety that impact people include generalized anxiety (being a 'worry wart' and nervous about anything and everything in general), obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), panic disorder ('anxiety attacks') which affects women twice as often as men, and PTSD such as can be triggered by rape, experiencing childhood sexual abuse, being in combat, or having other traumatizing experiences. Other anxieties include 'social anxiety' (being overly nervous around people), and phobias (fear of spiders, snakes, flying, etc.).

One of the more common ways to 'treat' anxiety is through alcohol. "I need a drink!" is something many say, and alcohol abuse developing over time then becomes a real possibility. Use of anti-anxiety medications such as Xanax, Ativan, Klonopin, or Valium is another means for treating it. However, this class of drugs is suspected of promoting the development of dementia such as Alzheimer's. Research has found that there is a 32% increased risk of Alzheimer's from using such a drug for 3-6 months, and a 84% increased risk resulting from taking them for more than 6 months. There is also a rebound effect as to anxiety becoming worse after the drug is no longer being used. And this class of drugs is known to be physically addictive.

An alternative approach to treating anxiety is through neurofeedback. There is published research which has found neurofeedback to be effective in reducing anxiety in its various forms, such as generalized anxiety and phobias. And its effectiveness has been found to be roughly equal to that of medication. Research also suggests that the benefit of neurofeedback may have long lasting effects after the treatment is over.

The American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry states that neurofeedback meets their clinical guidelines for treatment of anxiety.



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