Dear Alice,

The last week or so I've been having anxiety attacks or at least that's what I think they are. I've been tossing and turning at night. We have just moved, which isn't unusual. My husband's job moves us around a lot. I've never had this problem before and I'm starting to get worried. Should I see a doctor?

Worried

Answer

Dear Worried,

It's not at all uncommon to experience some degree of anxiety when you move, change jobs, graduate, get married, etc. ? even if these big life events are positive ones. If change-related angst continues well after you've settled into your new situation, or if it seems like your worries are more extreme than warranted, then you might consider a visit to your health care provider or mental health professional.

Anxiety that goes beyond general stress is often characterized by the following:

- Extreme and/or continuous worry and tension
- Irrational worries that perhaps go beyond what the situation warrants
- Physical symptoms like stomach aches, trouble sleeping, and headaches
- Irritability or social withdrawal, sometimes accompanied by increases in drinking or drug use
- Difficulty making decisions or concentrating

Your poor sleep may be a normal stress-related symptom or it may be something more, especially if any of the above sounds familiar. Anxiety attacks are usually characterized by the following symptoms:

- Physical symptoms such as rapid heartbeat, shortness of breath, shaking, and sweating
- Feelings of extreme fear or terror, sometimes accompanied by fears or thoughts of dying
- Rapid onset
- Usually no definable causes ? they seem to come out of nowhere, though certain triggers may be present (a memory, sound, thought, a smell, etc.).
Speaking with a counselor or therapist about the concerns and worries (including frequent moves) that impair your regular routine might be a good idea. Sometimes, therapy or a combination of therapy and medication may help alleviate the symptoms. Additionally, exercise may reduce stress and anxiety. Getting physically active regularly may help dial down the stress for some people dealing with stress and worry while for others, this option doesn't do enough or isn't feasible. It may be that what you are experiencing is normal stress that will subside as you settle, but if your sleep continues to be disrupted and you feel uneasy, a visit to a health care provider may prove beneficial.

Some of the resources below may also be of use to you:

- Mental Health America [2]
- Anxiety and Depression Association of America [3]
- The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) [4]

Hoping you're soon having lots of sweet dreams,

Alice!

Category:  
Emotional Health [5]  
Stress & Anxiety [6]

Related questions

Exercise motivation... for stress reduction [7]  
Panic attacks [8]  
Stress, anxiety, and learning to cope [9]  
Stressed out and anxious from schoolwork and everything [10]  
Help for agoraphobia [11]  
Help with adjusting to civilian life after years of military service? [12]

Resources

Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) (Morningside) [13]  
Mental Health Service (CUMC) [14]

Published date:  
Dec 05, 1997  
Last reviewed on:  
May 14, 2015
Go Ask Alice! is not an emergency or instant response service.

If you are in an urgent situation, please visit our Emergency page to view a list of 24 hour support services and hotlines.

Source URL: http://www.goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/anxiety-attacks-moving-again

Links