

CHAPTER 1

What Is Generalized Anxiety Disorder?

Chapter Review

1. What is Generalized Anxiety Disorder?

Generalized Anxiety Disorder *DSM-IV* Diagnostic Criteria

- A. Excessive anxiety and worry, occurring more days than not, for a period of at least six months, and is focused on a number of events or activities

Examples of adult worries in GAD:

- Daily responsibilities
- Health of family members
- Safety of children
- Finances
- Job security
- Relationships

Theme of childhood worries in GAD:

- Quality or competence of behavioral performance at home or in school

- B. Difficulty controlling the worry

- C. Three or more additional symptoms, including:

- Restlessness or feeling keyed up or on edge
- Being easily fatigued
- Difficulty concentrating or going blank
- Irritability
- Muscle tension
- Sleep disturbance

(continued)

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- D. The worry in GAD should not represent the feature of another psychiatric disorder.
- E. The anxiety, worry, or physical symptoms of GAD must cause clinically significant distress or functional impairment.
- F. Symptoms of GAD are not caused by the direct physiological effects of a substance or a general medical condition.

Chapter Review Test Questions

1. Which of the following best describes the primary diagnostic feature of Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)?
 - A. Excessive worry specifically about being humiliated in public
 - B. Excessive worry about several everyday or real-life problems
 - C. Excessive worry about having a specific disease
 - D. Excessive worry specifically about having an unexpected panic attack
2. True or false? According to the *DSM*, you can diagnose Generalized Anxiety Disorder when only the excessive worry criteria are met; that is, without any evidence of physiological overarousal.

Answer: B

Answer: False

Talking Points

As noted in the chapter, generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) is characterized by excessive worry about numerous real-life circumstances, yet worry is ubiquitous in the general population (i.e., everyone worries). To distinguish excessive worry from normal worry, diagnostic criteria place an emphasis on the frequency (i.e., "occurring more days than not") and chronicity (i.e., "for at least six months"). However, worry occurs in some other mental disorders and is not supposed to be diagnosed separately as GAD. Consider facilitating a discussion about common differential diagnoses in which "worry" occurs but is not considered GAD. You could ask the question "In what other mental disorders do you see excessive worry?" The following is a guide from criteria D in the *DSM* criteria for GAD:

- The focus of the anxiety and worry is not confined to features of an Axis I disorder, for example:
 - The anxiety or worry is not about having a Panic Attack (as in Panic Disorder)
 - Being embarrassed in public (as in Social Phobia)
 - Being contaminated (as in Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder)
 - Being away from home or close relatives (as in Separation Anxiety Disorder)
 - Gaining weight (as in Anorexia Nervosa)
 - Having multiple physical complaints (as in Somatization Disorder)
 - Having a serious illness (as in Hypochondriasis)

Chapter Reference

American Psychiatric Association. (2000). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (4th ed., text rev.; DSM-IV-TR). Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association.