

ABOUT GENERALISED ANXIETY DISORDER (GAD)



Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) is a persistent disorder, where the person experiences unfocused worry and anxiety. This anxiety is not connected to recent stressful events, although it can be aggravated by certain situations. It is seen twice as often in females than it is in males.

See the online practice guides for full references and to find out more:

edi.sa.edu.au/practiceguidance

Understanding generalised anxiety disorder

Learners with generalised anxiety tend to have a wide range of unreasonable, excessive and uncontrollable worries, including worries about the past, the future, and the present. They tend to experience anxiety in a range of settings, which can disrupt their ability to relax or enjoy activities. They may be restless or irritable and have trouble paying attention when worrying. They may also lack confidence.

Diagnosis of generalised anxiety disorder

GAD can only be diagnosed by a psychologist or psychiatrist. The main symptom is excessive anxiety and worry about a number of events or activities, more days than not, for at least 6 months. The DSM-5 criteria require at least 3 of the following symptoms be present for a diagnosis of GAD:

- restlessness
- difficulty concentrating
- easy fatigability
- irritability
- muscle tension
- disturbed sleep.

These symptoms can impact on a student's success in their learning environment. Learning can be affected by high absenteeism and difficulty concentrating and focusing on learning.



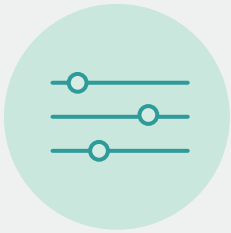
**Government
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Department for Education

GENERALISED ANXIETY DISORDER (GAD) ADJUSTMENTS



EXAMPLES OF ADJUSTMENTS



Teaching adjustments

- Provide clear timelines for tasks and present work in small manageable blocks rather than big overwhelming tasks.
- Set realistic and achievable goals for each lesson.
- Plan all transitions for the learner to minimise anxiety.



Social and emotional adjustments

- Present simple questions that help them to think of the situation in a different way. Replace worst-case scenarios with questions like 'what's the most likely outcome?' or 'what happened last time?'
- Teach learners to recognise their early warning signs of anxiety.
- Normalise mistakes as part of the learning process.



Cognitive load adjustments

- Develop a school arrival procedure. Have a clear routine for the start of each day. This may include a check in with a trusted adult.
- Establish a routine where the learner is able to predict what will happen, and what is expected within that routine.
- During a time when the learner is not anxious, work with them to develop a regulation scale. This helps the learner identify what's happening around them and how it's impacting on their anxiety.



Adjustments for high school

During a time when the learner is not anxious, work with them to develop a regulation scale that helps the learner identify what is happening around them that is impacting on their anxiety. As part of the plan identify what signals they are getting from their body that indicate they may be becoming anxious and ways they may respond that will help them manage their anxiety, for example breathing strategies, listening to music, mindful colouring, or physical activity.

