9.1: Introduction

Learning Objectives

- Apply the nursing process to clients with anxiety disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder
- Describe nursing assessments related to anxiety disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder
- Identify common nursing problems/diagnoses related to anxiety disorders
- Establish a safe environment
- Apply evidence-based practice when planning and implementing nursing care
- Describe common treatments for anxiety disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder
- Identify appropriate referrals to community resources
- Evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
- Provide patient education to clients and their family members

Anxiety is a part of everyday life and can be experienced to varying degrees from helpful to harmful. Anxiety is a response to stress, whether the stressor is experienced as a positive or negative. Positive stressors might be cleaning the house before family and friends arrive for a holiday gathering or studying for an exam whereas negative stressors can be losing one’s car keys or getting into a fight with a loved one. For example, mild anxiety can provide energy and concentration needed to complete important tasks or provide motivation to make healthy behavioral changes. However, excessive anxiety can cause distress and impair an individual’s functioning in social, educational, occupational, or other areas of functioning.
This chapter will describe levels of anxiety and common anxiety disorders such as generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, and various phobias. It will also describe how anxiety is related to obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and some medical conditions. The nursing process will be applied to caring for individuals experiencing anxiety.