

CASE STUDY OF GENERALISED ANXIETY DISORDER

The case of Sophie illustrates the *DSM-IV-TR* criteria for GAD. Sophie recently made an appointment to see a clinical psychologist. She reports that she has found it difficult to cope for some time now and that her stress levels have become worse over the last year. She has been a worrier for as long as she can remember, even as a child. But these days she finds herself worrying all the time.

Sophie worries about her own health and the health of her two young children. She finds herself noticing any internal sensations, like stomach tightness, that might indicate a health problem. She has been checking the internet for any information on health problems that might be helpful. Sophie fears that it is only a matter of time before she develops cancer or something equally bad. She goes over and over the worst case scenario in her mind, imagining herself with an incurable illness that has a devastating impact on her family. Even when she tries to stop thinking about her worry, Sophie finds her mind taking her back to the worst case scenario. She feels like her worrying is out of control.

Sophie also worries about her relationships. She is concerned she might not do the right thing and so tries her best to please others. This takes its toll as she finds she has no time for herself, but does not want to be selfish.

Sophie returned from stress leave to her administrative job last year. She feels pressured at work and does not have enough time to check for possible mistakes, which has increased her stress further since she wants to maintain her high standards. She wonders how her family will cope financially if she loses her job.

Sophie's worries have been severely impacting on her life. She finds it hard to get to sleep because of worrying and she has been more stressed and irritable with her husband. She repeatedly seeks reassurance from her family, which has placed a burden on these relationships, and she finds herself visiting doctors more often (even though all tests have failed to detect that anything is wrong). She says that her body is in a constant state of nervous tension and she just cannot relax.

Sophie is sure that all of this stress is not good for her health. She worries that she will go mad. She would like help to not worry so much, have better relationships with her family, and to be able to relax and not feel stressed all of the time.