

Generalized Anxiety Disorder

Diagnostic & Differential Diagnosis Worksheet

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This worksheet is designed to help clinicians organize clinical information when Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) is being considered. It can assist with assessment, differential diagnosis, and treatment planning, but it is not a substitute for a comprehensive clinical evaluation or formal diagnosis by a qualified mental health professional.

Part 1: Presenting Anxiety

Primary concerns

What brings the person to treatment?

What situations, thoughts, or circumstances currently trigger anxiety?

How long have these concerns been present?

Areas of excessive worry

Check areas that are currently associated with significant worry:

- ☐ Work, school, or performance
- ☐ Finances
- ☐ Family or relationships
- ☐ Health or illness
- ☐ Safety or danger
- ☐ Future events
- ☐ Everyday responsibilities
- ☐ Social situations
- ☐ Other: _____

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Is the worry excessive relative to the circumstances?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unclear

Does the person experience difficulty controlling or stopping the worry?

- ☐ Frequently
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ No

Part 2: Associated Symptoms

During periods of persistent anxiety or worry, assess for:

- ☐ Restlessness or feeling keyed up
- ☐ Fatigue or feeling easily exhausted
- ☐ Difficulty concentrating or mind going blank
- ☐ Irritability
- ☐ Muscle tension
- ☐ Sleep disturbance

Number of symptoms currently present: _____

Are symptoms causing clinically significant distress or interfering with functioning?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unclear

Areas affected:

- ☐ Occupational/school functioning
- ☐ Relationships
- ☐ Family functioning
- ☐ Social functioning
- ☐ Self-care
- ☐ Sleep
- ☐ Other: _____

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Part 3: Duration and Course

Has excessive anxiety or worry occurred more days than not for approximately six months or longer?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unclear

Course:

- ☐ Persistent
- ☐ Episodic
- ☐ Gradually worsening
- ☐ Recently improved
- ☐ Unclear

What was happening when the anxiety first became problematic?

Part 4: Differential Diagnosis

Use the following questions to determine whether another anxiety-related or psychiatric condition better accounts for the presentation.

Panic Disorder

Are there recurrent, unexpected panic attacks?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unclear

Is there persistent concern about additional attacks or significant behavioral change because of them?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unclear

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If panic attacks are the primary concern rather than generalized worry, consider Panic Disorder.

Social Anxiety Disorder

Is the anxiety primarily related to fear of being judged, embarrassed, rejected, or negatively evaluated by others?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unclear

Does the person avoid or endure social/performance situations with significant fear?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unclear

If anxiety is primarily social-evaluative, consider Social Anxiety Disorder.

Specific Phobia

Is the anxiety consistently focused on a particular object or situation?

Examples include animals, heights, flying, needles, blood, or other specific circumstances.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unclear

If the fear is narrowly focused on a specific stimulus, consider Specific Phobia.

Agoraphobia

Is anxiety primarily associated with situations where escape may be difficult or help may be unavailable if panic-like or incapacitating symptoms occur?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unclear

Examples may include public transportation, open or enclosed spaces, crowds, or being outside the home alone.

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Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

Are intrusive, unwanted thoughts, images, or urges prominent?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unclear

Are repetitive behaviors or mental rituals performed to reduce distress or prevent a feared outcome?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unclear

If obsessions and/or compulsions are central to the presentation, consider OCD rather than GAD.

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

Is there a history of exposure to a traumatic event that meets relevant trauma criteria?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unclear

Are trauma-related symptoms such as intrusive memories, avoidance, negative alterations in mood/cognition, or heightened arousal prominent?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unclear

If anxiety is primarily trauma-related, consider PTSD.

Separation Anxiety Disorder

Is the anxiety primarily focused on separation from attachment figures or fear that something harmful will happen to them?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unclear

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Illness Anxiety / Somatic-Related Concerns

Is the person's anxiety predominantly focused on having or developing a serious illness despite limited or absent medical symptoms?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unclear

Adjustment Disorder With Anxiety

Did the anxiety develop in response to an identifiable stressor and begin within the expected temporal relationship to that stressor?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unclear

Does the presentation appear better explained by another anxiety disorder?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unclear

Part 5: Rule-Out Considerations

Consider whether anxiety may be better explained by:

- ☐ Substance intoxication or withdrawal
- ☐ Medication effects
- ☐ Caffeine or other stimulant use
- ☐ Hyperthyroidism or other medical conditions
- ☐ Sleep disorders
- ☐ Another psychiatric disorder
- ☐ Acute environmental stress
- ☐ Other: _____

Relevant medical, medication, or substance-use factors:

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Part 6: Clinical Formulation

Primary anxiety presentation:

Most prominent triggers:

Primary cognitive themes:

Primary physical symptoms:

Primary behavioral responses:

Functional impact (Include frequency, intensity, duration, and impact on activities of daily living):

Protective factors and strengths:

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Differential Diagnosis Summary

Condition	Evidence Supporting	Evidence Against/Unclear
GAD		
Panic Disorder		
Social Anxiety Disorder		
Specific Phobia		
Agoraphobia		
OCD		
PTSD		
Separation Anxiety Disorder		
Illness Anxiety/Somatic Concerns		
Adjustment Disorder		
Substance/Medication-Induced Anxiety		
Medical Condition		

Clinical Impression

Based on the information currently available:

- ☐ GAD appears likely
- ☐ Another anxiety disorder appears more likely
- ☐ Multiple conditions may be present
- ☐ Additional assessment is needed
- ☐ Medical/substance-related causes should be evaluated
- ☐ Insufficient information for a clinical impression

Clinical rationale:

Important Clinical Note

Diagnostic decisions should be based on a comprehensive assessment that considers symptom pattern, duration, severity, developmental and psychosocial history, functional impairment, medical

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factors, medications and substances, and appropriate differential diagnoses. This worksheet is an organizational aid and should not be used as a stand-alone diagnostic instrument.