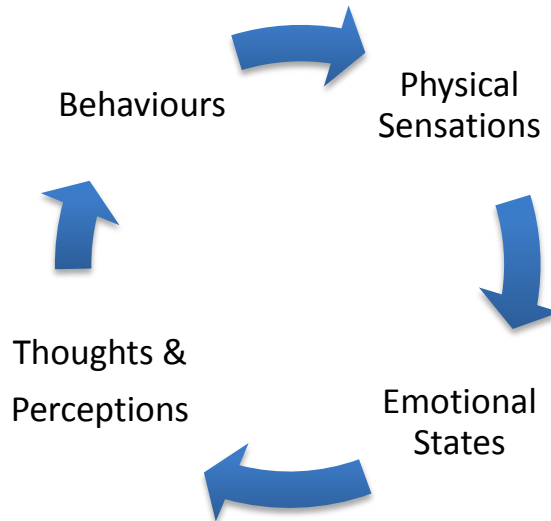


# UNDERSTANDING ANXIETY

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## Anxiety: What is it?

An organized response by which a person senses, evaluates, anticipates and responds to cues of threat or danger in one's internal or external environment.



Anxiety is usually recognized through sensations, emotions, thoughts or behaviours:

### Physical

- Increased heart rate
- Shallow breathing, tight chest
- Stomach-aches, headaches, “butterflies”

### Emotion

- Worry
- Apprehension
- Fear, dread
- Panic

### Behaviour

- Withdrawing
- Fast repetitive talking, jitters
- *Avoiding* – not going to school or work; avoiding people, thoughts, emotions...

### Cognitive/Thought Patterns

- Ruminating or obsessing
- “What if?!” scenarios
- Scanning for anxiety, threat

These indicators of anxiety act as *signals* to pay attention and cues for some kind of action to deal with the situation: whether to avoid, escape, problem-solve or act on the situation. This is a crucial part of the human instinctive system to stay safe and adapt.