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Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD).





What is Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD).

GAD is the most common stress/anxiety disorder with a prevalence of between 4-6 out of every 100 people. (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

However, studies have also suggest that up to 34% of adolescents may suffer from GAD.

The DMS-5 describes GAD, as where an individual suffers from unwanted/unnecessary and excessive, worry or apprehension within/about their day-to-day lives. (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Must occur more often than it is absent over a six-month period (91 days out of 180).

Does not fit better into the diagnostic of other anxiety/stress related disorders.

Has a negative effect on an individual's life. (American Psychiatric Association, 2013)

GAD also has a high comorbidity with other mental health conditions, such as panic disorder, depression and substance dependency (American Psychiatric Association, 2013;)

Symptoms of GAD

Heart palpitations.

Tiredness

Inability to concentrate

Restlessness

Procrastinating

Avoidance of triggers

Irritability

Muscular tension.

Trouble sleeping

The GAD 7 Diagnostic tool

The most Common diagnostic tool for diagnosing Generalized Anxiety Disorder, is the GAD 7 (Spitzer et al. 2006).

The GAD-7 scale, is a brief self-reporting measure consisting of 7 questions rated on a 4-point Likert scale (0-3) and has been found to have good validity (Johnson et al. 2019; Spitzer et al. 2006).

Individuals that score under 5 are considered not to meet the diagnosis for GAD. While those scoring 5-9 having mild, symptoms 10-14 moderate and 15+ severe.

The Biopsychosocial model looks at anxiety from a multidimensional perspective including Biological factors, Social factors, and Psychological factors.

Biological factors

An individual's genetics may play a part of their susceptibility to anxiety disorders. There is also a higher prevalence of GAD in women than men (Gottschalk & Domschke, 2017).

There is evidence that the size of the amygdala has an effect and is affected by the severity of levels of anxiety. (Chen et al. 2020;)

Social factors

An individual's early life may influence they deal with anxiety; parenting styles, learnt behaviours (Gottschalk & Domschke, 2017; Zdebik et al., 2022).

Culture may also be an influence with cultural and peer pressures

While past trauma may also affect an individual's ability/tolerance for future anxiety (Hogg et al., 2023).

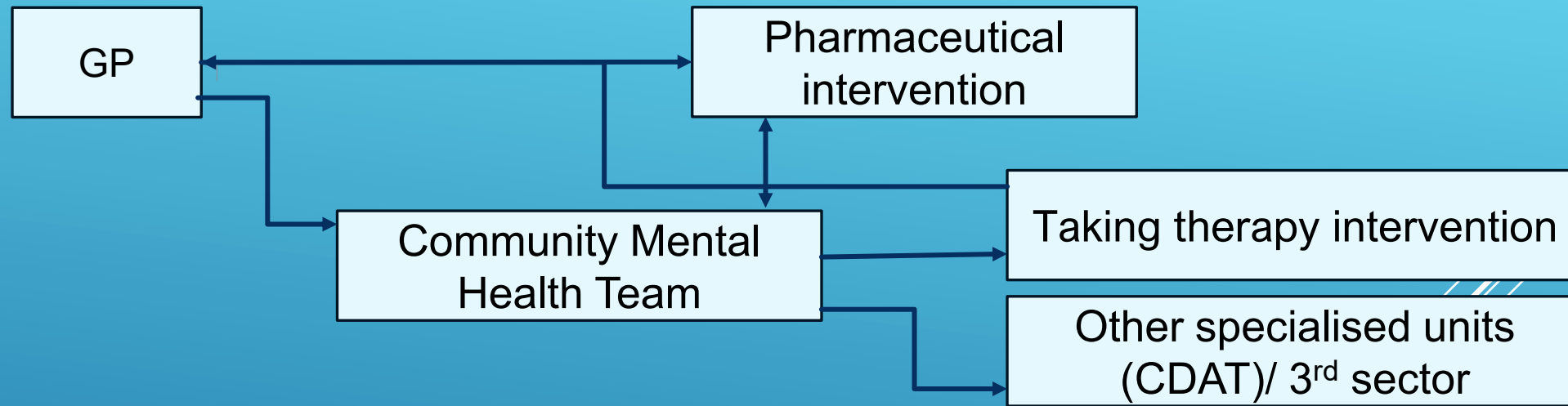
Psychological factors

The core beliefs or maladaptive beliefs about their own abilities to deal with situations; e.g. “I'm not good enough” , “I can't do this” (Koerner, Tallon & Kusec, 2015).

Someone with GAD may also Catastrophise the situation in a snowball effect.

While they may have a reduced ability to manage uncertainty (Zdebik et al., 2022).

Medical rout to treatment



Taking therapy interventions normally consisting of 5-15 sessions of 1-to-1 Cognitive behaviour therapy (NHS, 2025).

There has been substantial amount studies that suggest that CBT is an effective and cost-efficient treatment for GAD (Carl et al. 2020; Kumar et al. 2018).

Psychopharmaceutical treatments

Antidepressants such as SSRIs, SNRIs, are generally used to regulate the levels of serotonin (NHS, 2021; 2024; NICE, 2011).

The use of SSRIs have been found to be effective in the treatment of GAD (Carl et al., 2020; Castagna et al. 2023).

Pregabalin & Benzodiazepines can also be prescribed for anxiety (NICE, 2011).

However, like with all pharmaceuticals there is the risk of side-effects and the possibility of developing dependency (NICE, 2011; Soyka, 2017).

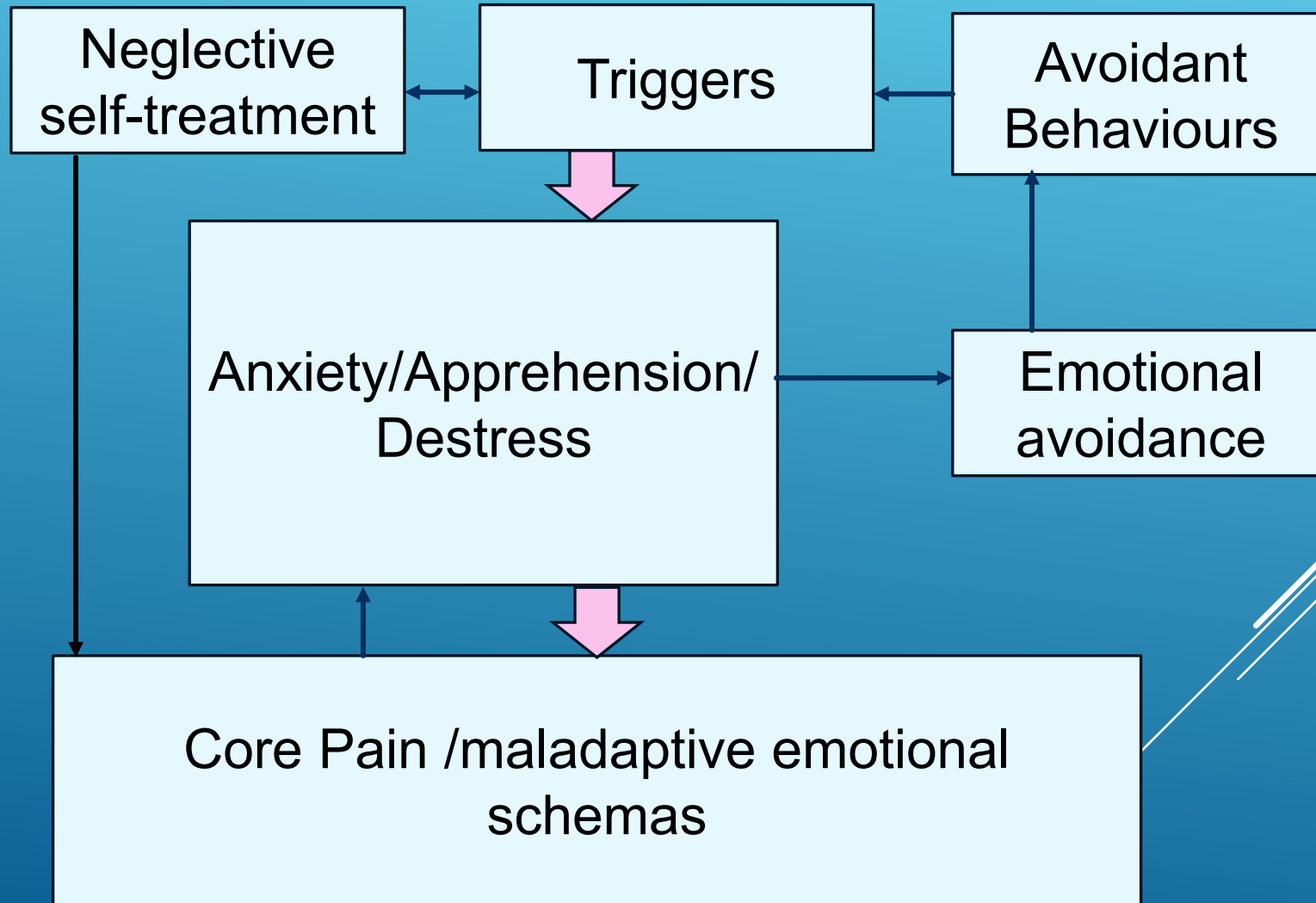
Emotion-focused therapy (EFT) for GAD

EFT is a process- focused, experiential treatment, drawing from person-centred and gestalt psychotherapy (Keogh & Timulak, 2023; Timulak & McElvaney, 2016).

EFT, helps the individual to identify and adapt maladaptive emotional processes/beliefs.

Razaghi (2023) comparing EFT and CBT suggests that although both are effective treatments EFT is more effective when the underlying issue is concerning emotions.

EFT conceptualization of GAD



(Adapted from; Timulak, & McElvaney, 2016)

Core Pain/maladaptive emotional schemas



Need's

Compassion

Protective
anger

Letting go/
acceptance

Relief

(Adapted from; Timulak, &
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