

Level	Perception	Signs/Symptoms	Helpful or a Hindrance	Nursing Interventions
Mild	Normal experiences of everyday life, with perceived reality in sharp focus.	Slight discomfort, restlessness, irritability, mild tensions, relieving behaviors such as nail biting, foot/finger tapping, or fidgeting.	Can be constructive for the person, as this may be a signal that something needs attention or is dangerous for them. The person can ask for help.	Emotional support; encouraging communication; family /significant other support.
Moderate	Perceptual field narrows, details are missing. The ability to think clearly is hampered; however, learning and problem-solving can still occur, but not at the optimal level.	Tension, pounding heart, increased pulse and respiratory rate, perspiration, gastric discomfort, headache, and urinary urgency. Voice tremors and visible; shaky hands are possible.	Can be constructive for the person, as this may be a signal that something needs attention or is dangerous for them. Can also be a hindrance to a person because they are unable to focus as sharply on details outside of the anxious thoughts.	Sitting with the client, speaking slowly and calmly, using short simple sentences. Assure client that the nurse is available, and they can ask for help if needed. Provide a quiet environment with decreased stimuli. Encourage the client to talk about their feelings and what happened prior to the symptoms/signs occurring. Ask the client, "What evidence do you have?" "Think a minute, are you basing this conclusion on fact or feeling?" Offer antianxiety medication as ordered. Help the client to problem-solve.
Severe	Perceptual field is greatly reduced. The person may focus only on one detail or many scattered details, but have trouble discerning what is happening in the environment, even when another person shows them. Possible confusion and may be dazed by the reality. Behavior is automatic and its purpose is to relieve anxiety.	Headache, nausea, dizziness, insomnia may increase. Trembling and experiencing a pounding heart are common. Hyperventilation and a sense of impending doom may occur.	The person needs to have intervention with this level of anxiety. They are unable to make safe or logical decisions.	Remove the client from the stimuli if possible. Stay with the client. Ask the client to discuss their feelings and what happened for the anxiety to accelerate, if possible. Same interventions as moderate anxiety. Offer antianxiety medication as ordered.

Panic	<p>Unable to process what is happening and may lose touch with reality. Dysregulated behavior results. Pacing, running, shouting, screaming, or withdrawal may result. The person may experience hallucinations, or false sensory perceptions, such as seeing people or objects not seen by others.</p>	<p>Immobility, or severe hyperactivity, garbled speech, or inability to speak, numbness, tingling, shortness of breath, dizziness, chest pain, nausea, trembling, chills, flushing skin, palpitations.</p>	<p>This person needs immediate attention. They may need to be removed from the situation or stimuli. They may need to be placed in an environment where they cannot hurt themselves or others.</p>	<p>Help the client to move to safe space. Allow client to pace, or withdraw; however, keep the client within eyesight. Stay with the client. Help and keep client safe from injury. All interventions with severe anxiety and offer medication as needed and ordered. Once the incident is over, debrief with the client about what happened and assist the client in reframing the issues. Provide honest praise for the client's ability to recover.</p>
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Table 2.3 Peplau's Levels of Anxiety (nurseslabs.com)