

PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

EMPLOYMENT COUNSELLING

Dealing with
emotional distress
caused by separation
from the loved ones



employment & labour

Department:
Employment and Labour
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

INTRODUCTION

- Labour migration can be a difficult and challenging experience for both the migrant worker and the family left behind.
- SAD is a common issue that arises among family members, especially children and spouses, when one member leaves for work in another region or country.



Causes

SAD can be triggered by life stresses that result in separation from loved ones. It most often begins in childhood, but may continue into the teenage years and sometimes into adulthood.

- Past unresolved intimate relationship and vulnerability that unconsciously instill insecure attachment styles, eventually become possessive, controlling, or jealous, overprotective towards family.
- Illness or death of a loved one, loss of a beloved pet, divorce of parents, or moving or going away from the loved ones.
- Genetics may also play a role in developing the disorder.
- Certain personalities and temperaments, which are more prone to anxiety disorders than others are OCPD, APD, etc
- Environmental issues, such as experiencing some type of disaster that involves separation.



Symptoms

It causes significant distress in daily functioning, and presents with the following symptoms:

- Recurrent and excessive distress about anticipating or being away from home or loved ones, feeling on the edge, problems thinking straight, and experiencing dry mouth, and heart palpitations, headaches, stomach aches or other symptoms when separation from a parent or other loved one is anticipated
- Constant, excessive worry about losing a parent or other loved one to an illness or a disaster or deployment
- Constant worry that something bad will happen, such as being lost or kidnapped, causing separation from parents or other loved ones
- Refusing to be away from home because of fear of separation and substance abuse.



Symptoms

- Not wanting to be home alone and without a parent or other loved one in the house
- Reluctance or refusing to sleep away from home without a parent or other loved one and recurrent nightmares about separation.
- Negative consequences in social and work life – social isolation, loss of employment opportunities or the ability to prosper at work, relational difficulties, or the ability to live a satisfying and fulfilling
- Frequent episodes of sudden feelings of intense anxiety and fear, associated with panic disorder and panic attacks.
- Overwhelming reactions following anticipation or actual separation of the loved person, surpassing one's adaptation strategies can be very traumatic, resulting into permanent personality disorders.



Treatment

- 1. Communication:** Frequent communication with the person who has migrated is essential to provide reassurance and ease anxiety. Technology has made it significantly easier to stay in touch and allowing families to stay connected regularly, use options like video calls, messaging, and social media.
- 2. Acceptance and normalize:** The selected candidate and family members left behind can be engaged together to ensure common understanding, support and achievement of intended goals. They can be assisted to accept and normalise reality of decision and long-term benefits of the family from the temporary phase experiences. Family members should be encouraged to focus on their daily lives, work, and activities, and not keep dwelling on the absence of the person who left, but rather to express your feelings/ thoughts about him/her and directly engaging with him/her.

(continued...)



- 3. Support Groups:** Consisting of people who are also in the same situation, can help both candidates and members left behind connect with other people experiencing the same anxiety. They can provide a platform to share their worries and find relief and comfort in each other's company.
- 4. Exercises and emotional regulation:** Help both candidates and family members to regulate disturbing emotions and reduce anxiety and internalise acceptance. Breathing exercises, yoga, meditation, and other techniques.
- 5. Interdependence:** The ability to build trust, love and autonomy and still be deeply connected with another person, even when a person is not around.
- 6. Seeking professional help:** In the case when feelings of anxiety persist, as it can allow for more personalized and in-depth support through counselling to develop coping strategies, cognitive-behavioural therapy, mindfulness (or refer further in case beyond one's scope of competency).

References

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Thank You...



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