

# The Impact of the War in the Middle East – An Unexpected Challenge

## HOW YOU CAN BETTER DEAL WITH THE FEAR AND ANXIETY IT MAY BE CAUSING...

The outbreak of war and escalated conflict in the Middle East is already taking a toll on individuals in ways that were difficult to anticipate. This war has stirred additional anxiety among many, leaving us to wonder why it's affecting us and what we can do to address it. It's particularly tough for Jewish and Muslim Australians who are experiencing this new war deeply.

## A COMPLEX CONTEXT FOR AUSTRALIANS

The context of the war in the Middle East is especially challenging for many Australians today. Alongside the anxiety and division caused by differing perspectives on the referendum for our First Nations people, we now grapple with a war in the Middle East. This holds particular significance for those with Jewish or Muslim heritage, as it has substantial personal, spiritual, and emotional implications. For individuals of these backgrounds, the fear of how this war might impact their daily lives in Australia looms large. The concerns range from wearing religious attire to work or places of worship and the unsettling notion that it might provoke discrimination.

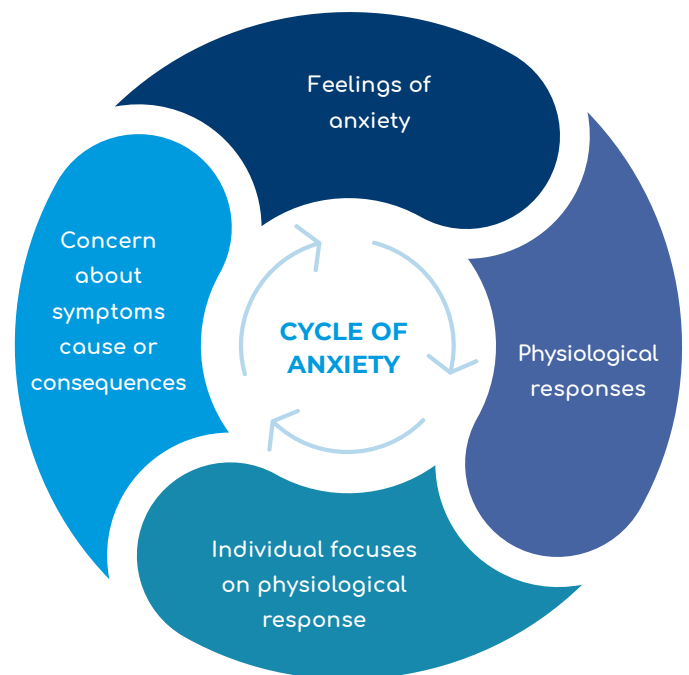
## UNDERSTANDING ANTICIPATORY ANXIETY

Many Australians are experiencing heightened anxiety in relation to this war. For many it is a special category of stress and anxiety – anticipatory anxiety.

Anticipatory anxiety is when individuals experience heightened stress and anxiety when thinking about future events. It's marked by overestimating the likelihood of an event and underestimating one's ability to cope with it. While it's not a standalone

mental health disorder, it can contribute to more significant mental health problems. The war in the Middle East has triggered anticipatory anxiety in many well-balanced individuals, given the widespread unrest and news coverage surrounding it.

## BREAKING DOWN THE ANXIETY CYCLE



The cycle of anxiety is familiar to many, although it's not always described using clinical terms. Loved ones might perceive it as dramatic or excessive worrying, often dismissing it as being overly emotional. Catastrophizing is a common form of anticipatory anxiety, even though it might not be recognised as such. Many life events can evoke normal anticipatory anxiety, such as hosting a holiday meal, going on a date, or taking an important exam.

## FIND OUT MORE

The issue arises when anticipatory anxiety becomes problematic, making it challenging to function normally and perform everyday tasks. When this anxiety is focused on potential overwhelming outcomes, it can lead to panic and severely impact one's life. While some of this anxiety is rational and adaptive, it can sometimes become excessive, disabling, and detrimental to mental health.

### MANAGING PROBLEMATIC ANTICIPATORY ANXIETY

If you find that anticipatory anxiety is interfering with your daily life, it's essential to seek help. A mental health expert can offer valuable guidance to help you gain perspective and regain control, breaking the cycle of anxiety that's negatively impacting your life. That's where your EAP can assist at no charge to you or any of your family members who may access the service.

### GLOBAL ANXIETY: THE CURRENT STATE

The global anxiety stemming from the war in the Middle East is particularly intense right now. This heightened anxiety can be attributed to the unprecedented nature of the conflict, leaving many aspects of it uncharted and deeply uncertain. For many Australians, this level of warfare is an unfamiliar experience, despite the long-standing tensions in the region.

### TIPS FOR COPING WITH FEAR OF PERSECUTION OR DISCRIMINATION

- 1. Educate Yourself** - Knowledge is a powerful tool. Understand the complexities of the conflict and the history behind it. This can help you engage in informed discussions and dispel misconceptions.
- 2. Build a Support Network** - Surround yourself with friends and family who understand your fears and concerns. Sharing your anxieties with those who care about you can be therapeutic.

- 3. Self-Care** - Prioritise self-care routines to alleviate stress. Exercise, meditation, and mindfulness can help you maintain emotional balance.
- 4. Stay Informed but Limit Exposure** - While staying informed is essential, constant exposure to distressing news can exacerbate anxiety. Set boundaries on your media consumption.
- 5. Community Involvement** - Get involved in organizations that promote tolerance and understanding among different communities. This can empower you and make a positive impact.
- 6. Reach out to someone who may be struggling** - We may know someone who is directly impacted by the war, fearful of leaving their home, or not showing up to work. Reach out to them if you have a close personal relationship and see how you can help.
- 7. Social media** - Consider limiting or even deleting social media platforms that could be sharing confronting content related to the war. This is particularly important for children who may be exposed to traumatic material through platforms that allow confronting or traumatic material to be shared.
- 8. Seek Professional Help** - This is where Converge's EAP can be a great help. We have a large team of counsellors across Australia ready and on standby to help you or your loved ones deal with this particularly difficult time.

Use our online booking to access support or ring us on **1300 867 327**.



Remember, it's normal to feel anxious about the state of the world, but there are steps you can take to regain control and foster resilience in the face of adversity.

### FIND OUT MORE