

SEND Bulletin NO. 12



Misophonia

Misophonia is a condition that can cause extreme emotional or physiological reactions to certain noises like chewing or breathing, or actions such as clicking a pen or someone jiggling their foot.

Also known as Selective Sound Sensitivity Syndrome, nearly one in five people suffer from misophonia. It can often lead to extreme reactions such as anger or disgust, and sometimes even give someone the urge to hurt the person making the noise or make them leave a situation.

Key characteristics

People who have the disorder can feel uncomfortable, anxious, angry and emotionally distressed when they hear or see these triggers and it can lead to them avoiding certain situations.

These 'trigger' sounds are often made by other people and are usually focused on the mouth, throat or facial movements. Those who have the condition are often unable to tolerate family members, work, public and social situations.

The main symptoms of misophonia tend to be anger and/or anxiety. Some might also find themselves feeling frustrated at the sounds they can hear. In some people, the response to certain sounds causes a rush of adrenaline and a 'fight or flight' response which is overwhelming and disproportionate to the situation they're in. This rapid and intense response can leave you feeling shaky, stressed and even lead to a rapid heartbeat and sweating.

That means the reactions can be:

- **Emotional.** These are feelings you experience, and they can be intense or overwhelming. For many, these feelings escalate rapidly, as if someone stepped on your emotional gas pedal. That means irritation or annoyance can quickly turn into anger or even rage.
- **Body.** These are self-protective processes that kick in automatically. Most of these are similar to what happens to you in a dangerous or frightening situation.

- **Behavioral.** These are actions that happen in response to trigger sounds. These are usually impulse- or instinct-driven. That means you may not have full control over them. Violent reactions (toward either people or objects) are possible, but not common.

Emotional reactions can include:

- Anger.
- Anxiety.
- Disgust.
- Fear.
- Irritation.

Body reactions can include:

- Blood pressure increases.
- Chest pressure or tightness.
- Goosebumps (gooseflesh).
- Heart rate increases.
- Sweating.

Behavioral reactions can include:

- Avoiding situations where trigger sounds can happen.
- Leaving the area when a trigger sound happens.
- Verbal or vocal reactions, such as talking or yelling at who/what made the sound).
- Non-violent action to stop the sound.
- Violent action to stop the sound (rare).

Support strategies

- Sound therapy
- Counselling
- Cognitive Behavioural therapy
- Wearing of headphones/earplugs
- Stress management techniques such as regular exercise and getting enough sleep

If you would like a particular theme covered, have any interesting information or resources which you would like to share with your colleagues via this fortnightly bulletin please e-mail me and I will share accordingly.

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Many thanks

Anne