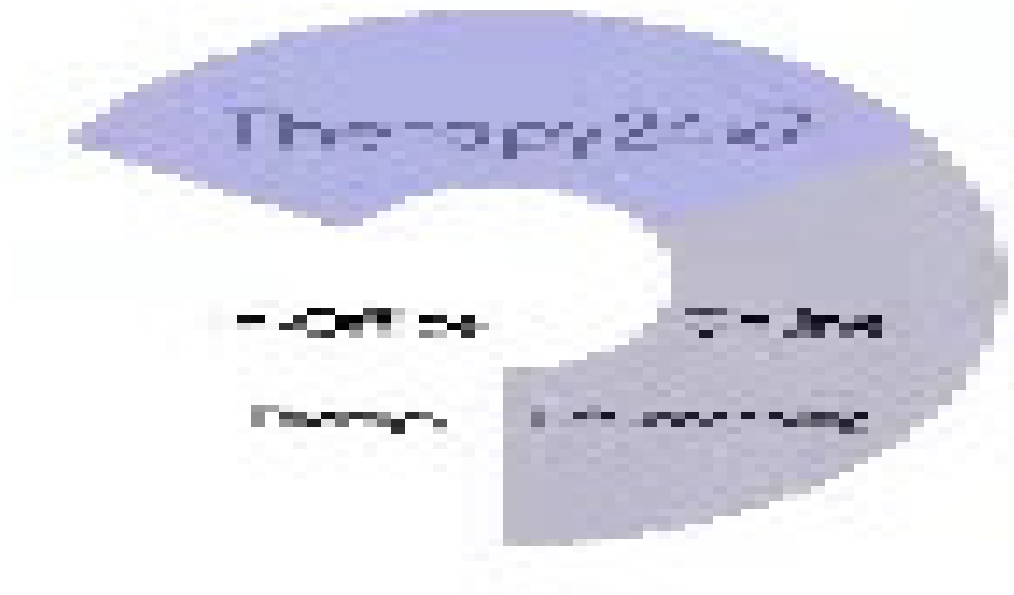




Professional Success Can Coincide with Unrecognised Anxiety, New Research Highlights

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Clinicians working with New York City professionals report that professional success often delays recognition of high-functioning anxiety. The professionals who bring their anxiety to Therapy24x7 rarely arrive in crisis. They arrive confused. They have just made partner, closed a round, or won the promotion they chased for a decade, and the reward has landed as dread rather than relief. At a psychodynamic practice a few blocks from Grand Central Terminal, clinicians say that scene recurs so often it has a working name: high-functioning anxiety, a term they use for anxiety that hides not behind failure but behind a career that keeps climbing.

It is a recognition problem before it is a treatment problem. Most conditions announce themselves through decline, the missed deadline or the slipping quarter that finally makes a person stop and ask what is wrong. High-functioning anxiety works the other way. According to clinicians at Therapy24x7, the professionals they see often keep advancing while the strain underneath worsens, so the usual alarm rarely sounds. The career becomes an alibi. As long as the results hold, the strain reads as the price of ambition rather than a signal worth reading.

National Institute of Mental Health data estimates that 19.1 percent of U.S. adults experience an anxiety disorder in a given year, while 31.1 percent experience one at some point in their lives. These national figures refer to diagnosable anxiety disorders; they do not measure high-functioning anxiety, New York City professionals, or Therapy24x7 clients. They provide broader public-health context for the practice's clinical observation that significant anxiety can coexist with continued outward functioning.

Clinicians at Therapy24x7 point to a specific mechanism. In high-pressure work, the behaviors anxiety produces are the same behaviors the job rewards. The associate who re-reads the filing at midnight is thorough. The analyst who answers within minutes at any hour is committed. The founder who will not delegate is a visionary who cares. Conduct that would read as distress in another setting is reinforced instead, quarter after quarter, with bonuses, titles and praise. In Therapy24x7's clinical experience, success does not conceal anxiety by hiding it. It conceals anxiety by rewarding it.

"Achievement is the one symptom no one is in a hurry to treat," said Efrat Gotlib, LCSW, founder and clinical director of Therapy24x7. "When the anxiety is also producing the results, the people around the person have reasons to leave it alone, and so does the person. You do not investigate a fever that keeps winning you awards."

The pattern is especially difficult to recognize in professional cultures that reward speed, availability, precision and endurance. Therapy24x7 clinicians work with professionals across New York City's finance, law, consulting, healthcare, technology and media sectors, where the same traits that can accompany anxiety may also be praised as commitment or ambition. The practice presents these as de-identified, composite clinical observations, not findings from a formal study or claims about New York professionals as a whole.

The presentation may differ by industry. In finance, clinicians may hear about vigilance that does not leave the desk; in law, perfectionism and fear of one missed detail; in consulting, identity tied to the next deliverable; and in healthcare, technology and media, difficulty resting without feeling behind. The camouflage is similar: anxious behavior can be difficult to distinguish from the professional ideal.

Treatment depends on the individual and may include psychotherapy, medication evaluation when appropriate, or both. Therapy24x7 uses weekly psychodynamic psychotherapy to examine patterns and internal expectations that keep anxiety active beneath outward success.

Therapy24x7 is careful about the limits of what it is describing. These are observations from one practice, not findings from a study or a claim about professionals as a whole. In the practice's clinical experience, success and strain can climb together, and the presence of one is not evidence of the absence of the other. The practice does not argue that ambition is the problem. It argues that ambition is an unreliable witness.

"The mistake I see most often is treating visible success as proof that help can wait," Gotlib said. "Wait until the strain finally disrupts the career, relationship, sleep or physical health, and the work often becomes more complicated. By then, therapy may need to address not only the anxiety, but the consequences that accumulated while it was still being rewarded."

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Therapy24x7

Therapy24x7 is a New York City group psychotherapy practice offering weekly, insight-oriented therapy for adults in person across NYC and online statewide, and is in-network with Cigna and Aetna.

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