In addition to the brain systems it’s important to look at contributions of neurotransmitters, of which many NT systems have been found to be implicated. Research has focused on GABA and Serotonin.

- GABA is the main inhibitory neuron, increase in GABA functioning reduces anxiety, arousal, muscle tone, alertness therefore it is suggested that there is a reduction in GABA function in anxiety disorders.
- This has been supported by studies that have found reduced BZ binding throughout various brain regions in anxiety disorders such as Bremmer et al. (2000; PFC)
- BZs bind to GABA a and b receptors and increase GABA. They are addictive and there is danger of overdose.
- Serotonin is released by the raphe nuclei in the brainstem but affects lots of areas in the brain. Gradual changes lead to slower modulation of other brain circuits, particularly those involved in emotion.
- Dubovsky and Thomas (1995) – Found that both fear and stress activate the serotonergic pathways.
- 5HT – 5ht1a receptor is the most common one in anxiety
- SSRIs block re-uptake of 5HT, increasing synaptic levels of 5HT. SSRIs are the first line of pharmacological treatment – they have fewer side effects, safe in overdose.

Stressful life events

- Environmental events may also play a role in shaping beliefs about the consequence of anxiety symptoms. The experience of stressful life events, particularly stressors that are uncontrollable and unpredictable, represents one possibility.
- Grant, Compas, Thurm and McMahon (2004) - The experience of uncontrollable stressful life events has been consistently implicated in the etiology of anxiety symptomatology among children and adolescents.
- Hammen, Henry and Daley (2000) examined the association between recent stressful life events and the prevalence of anxiety according to exposure to childhood adversity. Those with more stressful life events (30% of the sample) had a greater prevalence of anxiety disorders and this was even higher in those exposed to childhood adverse events.

Early experiences

- anxiety comes from unconscious internal conflicts, very to do with loss and separation causing anxiety later on (e.g. in relationships, scared to form them in case of loss).
- Freud proposed that anxiety results from repression of id impulses of sexual desires into the unconscious. Repression (and so denying wish-fulfilment) creates tension that is expressed through anxiety.
- Phobias develop through conflict and fixation in one of the psychosexual stages. Feelings become attached to a certain object that then symbolises the conflict.
- Evidence for: Little Hans – had a phobia of horses which Freud explained at resembling his father, he feared his father through castration anxiety. But was only horses and carts not horses generally...
- Evidence against: Other accounts provide a simpler and more convincing account. Little Hans – explained the phobia himself as resulting from witnessing a serious accident involving a horse and cart moving at high speed.