

Social phobia and fear of public speaking psychology essay



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A phobia is an intense fear of something that poses little or no actual danger. Common phobias and fears include closed-in places, heights, driving, flying insects, snakes, and needles. However, people can develop phobias of virtually anything. Most phobias develop in childhood, but they can also develop during adulthood.

If you have a phobia, you probably realize that your fear is unreasonable, yet you still can't control your feelings. Just thinking about the feared object or situation may make you anxious and when you're actually exposed to the thing you fear, the terror is automatic and overwhelming.

The experience is so nerve-racking that you may go to great lengths to avoid it; inconveniencing yourself or even changing your lifestyle. If you have claustrophobia, for example, you might turn down a lucrative job offer if you have to use a lift to get to the office. If you have a fear of heights, you might drive an extra 20 miles in order to avoid a tall bridge.

Understanding your phobia is the first step to overcoming it. It's important to know that phobias are common. Having a phobia doesn't mean you're crazy! It also helps to know that phobias are highly treatable. You can overcome your anxiety and fear, no matter how out of control it feels.

It is normal and even helpful to experience fear in dangerous situations. Fear is an adaptive human response. It serves a protective purpose, activating the automatic "fight-or-flight" response. With our bodies and minds alert and ready for action, we are able to respond quickly and protect ourselves.

But with phobias the threat is greatly exaggerated or nonexistent. For example, it is only natural to be afraid of a snarling Doberman, but it may be irrational to be terrified of a friendly poodle on a lead, as you might be if you have a dog phobia.

The difference between normal fear and a phobia

Normal fear

Phobia

Feeling anxious when flying through turbulence or taking off during a storm

Not going to your best friend's island wedding because you'd have to fly there

Experiencing butterflies when peering down from the top of a skyscraper or climbing a tall ladder

Turning down a great job because it's on the 10th floor of the office building

Getting nervous when you see a pit bull or a Rottweiler

Steering clear of the park because you might see a dog

Feeling a little queasy when getting an injection or when your blood is being drawn

Avoiding necessary medical treatments or doctor's checkups because you're terrified of needles

Rottweiler

dog

Feeling a little queasy when getting an injection or when your blood is being drawn

Avoiding necessary medical treatments or doctor's checkups because you're terrified of needles

Normal fears in children

Many childhood fears are natural and tend to develop at specific ages. For example, many young children are afraid of the dark and may need a nightlight to sleep; that doesn't mean they have a phobia. In most cases, they will grow out of this fear as they get older.

If your child's fear is not interfering with his or her daily life or causing him or her a great deal of distress, then there's little cause for undue concern.

However, if the fear is interfering with your child's social activities, school performance, or sleep, you may want to see a qualified child therapist.

Which of my child's fears are normal?

According to the Child Anxiety Network, the following fears are extremely common and considered normal:

0-2 years – Loud noises, strangers, separation from parents, large objects.

3-6 years – Imagination (i. e. ghosts/monsters), sleeping alone, darkness, strange noises.

7-16 years – Fears such as injury, illness, school performance, death, natural disasters.

Common types of phobias and fears

There are 4 general types of phobias and fears:

Animal phobias. Examples: fears of snakes, spiders, rodents, and dogs.

Natural environment phobias. Examples: fears of heights, storms, open water, and darkness.

Situational phobias (fears triggered by a specific situation). Examples: fears of enclosed spaces (claustrophobia), flying, driving, tunnels, and bridges.

Blood-Injection-Injury phobia. The fear of blood, injury, needles or other medical procedures.

Some phobias don't fall into one of the four common categories. Such phobias include fears of choking, getting a disease such as cancer, germs, illness, death and fear of clowns (yes, really!)

Social phobia and fear of public speaking

Image-social phobia & fear of speaking

Social Phobia, also called social anxiety disorder, is fear of social situations where you may be embarrassed or judged. If you have social phobia you may be excessively self-conscious and afraid of humiliating yourself in front of others. Your anxiety about how you will look and what others will think may lead you to avoid certain social situations you'd otherwise enjoy.

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Fear of public speaking, an extremely common phobia, is a type of social phobia. Other fears associated with social phobia include fear of eating or drinking in public, talking to strangers, taking exams, mingling at a party, and being asked to speak in class.

Agoraphobia (fear of open spaces)

image of angrophobia(fear of open spaces)

Agoraphobia is another phobia that doesn't fit neatly into any of the 4 categories. Traditionally thought to involve a fear of public places and open spaces, it is now believed that agoraphobia develops as a complication of panic attacks.

Afraid of having another panic attack, you become anxious about being in situations where escape would be difficult or embarrassing, or where help wouldn't be available immediately. For example, you are likely to avoid crowded places such as shopping centres and cinemas. You may also avoid cars, planes, and other forms of travel. In more severe cases, you might only feel safe at home.

Signs and symptoms of phobias

The symptoms of a phobia can range from mild feelings of apprehension and anxiety to a full-blown panic attack. Typically, the closer you are to the thing you're afraid of, the greater your fear will be. Your fear will also be higher if getting away is difficult.

Physical signs and symptoms of a phobia

Difficulty breathing

Racing or pounding heart

Chest pain or tightness

Trembling or shaking

Feeling dizzy or lightheaded

A churning stomach

Hot or cold flashes; tingling sensations

Sweating

Emotional signs and symptoms of a phobia

Feeling of overwhelming anxiety or panic

Feeling an intense need to escape

Feeling “ unreal” or detached from yourself

Fear of losing control or going crazy

Feeling like you’re going to die or pass out

Knowing that you’re overreacting, but feeling powerless to control your fear

Symptoms of Blood-Injection-Injury Phobia

The symptoms of blood-injection-injury phobia are slightly different from other phobias. When confronted with the sight of blood or a needle, you experience not only fear but disgust.

Like other phobias, you initially feel anxious as your heart speeds up. However, unlike other phobias, this acceleration is followed by a quick drop in blood pressure, which leads to nausea, dizziness, and fainting. Although a fear of fainting is common in all specific phobias, blood-injection-injury phobia is the only phobia where fainting can actually occur.

When to seek help for phobias and fears

Although phobias are common, they don't always cause considerable distress or significantly disrupt your life. For example, if you have a snake phobia, it may cause no problems in your everyday activities if you live in a city where you are not likely to run into one. On the other hand, if you have a severe phobia of crowded spaces, living in a big city would pose a problem.

If your phobia doesn't really impact your life that much, it's probably nothing to be concerned about. But if avoidance of the object, activity, or situation that triggers your phobia interferes with your normal functioning or keeps you from doing things you would otherwise enjoy, it's time to seek help.

Consider treatment for your phobia if:

It causes intense and disabling fear, anxiety, and panic.

You recognize that your fear is excessive and unreasonable.

You avoid certain situations and places because of your phobia.

Your avoidance interferes with your normal routine or causes significant distress.

You've had the phobia for over 6 months.

Self-help or therapy for phobias: which treatment is best?

When it comes to treating phobias, self-help strategies and therapy can both be effective. What's best for you depends on a number of factors, including the severity of your phobia, and the amount of support you need.

Self-help is always worth a try. The more you can do for yourself, the more in control you'll feel-which goes a long way when it comes to phobias and fears. However, if your phobia is so severe that it triggers panic attacks or uncontrollable anxiety, you may want to get additional support.

The good news is that phobia treatment has a great track record. Not only does it work extremely well, but you tend to see results very quickly-sometimes in as a little as 1 or 2 sessions.

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