

Symptoms, causes and remedies or treatment options for phobias

[Psychology](#)



Phobia

“ A phobia is an intense fear of something that, in reality, poses little or no actual danger. Common phobias and fears include closed-in places, heights, highway driving, flying insects, snakes, and needles” (Phobias and Fears, 2011). “ Anxiety and fear are normal responses to the perceived threat” (Peurifoy, 2005, p. 2). However the perceived threats need not be the real ones always. Thye thoughts about unrealistic threats can be referred as phobias. Almost the entire people have some kind of phobias. In other words, everyone has some kind of irrational fear which is often labeled as phobias. For example, some people are afraid of rats whereas others are afraid of even cockroaches. In psychology, phobia is labeled as an anxiety disorder in which the patient may develop persistent fear or anxieties about an object or situation. Majority of the phobias develops during childhood and in some cases , it may carry throughout the entire life span of the person. This paper analyses various symptoms, causes and remedies or treatment options for phobias.

Symptoms of phobias

Phobias can be classified into different categories such as; animal phobias, environment phobias, situational phobia, injury phobia etc. Even though phobias can be labeled as some kind of fears, all the fears are not phobias. For example, a person Experiencing butterflies when peering down from the top of a skyscraper or climbing a tall ladder cannot be labeled as phobia whereas Turning down a great job because it’s on the 10th floor of the office building is definitely a kind of phobia (Phobias and Fears, 2011). In the first case, the person is facing fear which is natural or normal whereas in the

second case the persons is experiencing phobia which is abnormal.

Phobias may have both physical as well as emotional symptoms. According to a recent study conducted by Nader Amir and Jessica Bomyea, “ individuals with elevated trait anxiety experience deficits in attention control that lead to poor performance on cognitive tasks” (Amer & Boumea, 2011, p. 504).

Shortness of breath, increased heart beat rates, choking, numbness, chest pain, trembling, feeling dizzy, sweating nausea, fear of dying, feeling anxiety, fear of going out of control or crazy, feeling of an intense need for escape, feeling of unrealistic incidents, fear of losing control etc are some of the common symptoms of phobia (Bourne, 2011, p. 7).

Causes of Phobia

It is difficult to cite any specific cause for phobias. However, bad parenting, family culture, social setups, unexpected tragic life events etc can cause phobias. Genetic reasons are also often cited for phobias. In other words, people with a family history of phobias may have more chances of becoming phobia patents. “ People whose parents either were overly protective or were distant in raising them may be at more risk of developing phobias. Phobia sufferers have been found to be more likely to manage stress by avoiding the stressful situation”(Phobias, 2011). There are many cases in which children brought up under strict parental control developing some kind of phobias. Proper socializing is necessary for the children to learn from others and to avoid their concerns and fears about certain situations. For example, teenagers who failed to get proper exposure, during childhood may develop some kind of phobias when they forced to stay in college hostels along with others. In short, phobias can be developed as a result of both

genetic and environmental reasons.

Treatment for phobias

“ The three main, conventional treatment modalities for anxiety disorders are behavioral therapy, exposure therapy, and drugs” (Common Phobia Treatments, n. d). Since phobias are of different kinds, the nature of the phobia or the exact reasons for the phobia need to be investigated before prescribing any treatment option for it. Anxiety is a common symptom of most of the phobias and therefore medications useful to reduce anxiety is commonly used in the treatment of phobias. “ Simple or specific phobias have been quite effectively treated with behavior therapy. The behaviorists involved in classical conditioning techniques believe that the response of phobic fear is a reflex acquired to non-dangerous stimuli”(Rainey, 1997). Behavioral therapy concentrates on the deconditioning of the stimulus which causes phobia. The therapist helps the patient to realize the reality and to avoid the unnecessary fear and worries caused by the stimulus.

If the person were to be exposed to the non-dangerous stimulus time after time without any harm being experienced, the phobic response would gradually extinguish itself. Also, this assumes that the person does not also experience the dangerous stimulus during that same extended period of time (Rainey, 1997).

For example, suppose a person is afraid of snakes. The therapist first of all make him aware that all the snakes are not poisonous and therefore there is no point in worrying about the presence of snakes all the time. In order to avoid the fear of snakes, the therapists can expose the patient to some kind of nonpoisonous snakes for a particular period of time. If this activity

repeated for few weeks, the patient may started to decrease his worries or fear about snakes. Some kind of narcotic drugs can also be used to decrease the anxiety and fear. Social anxiety phobias are normally caused by negative thoughts. “ Challenging these negative thoughts, either through therapy or on your own, is one effective way to reduce the symptoms of social anxiety disorder” (Social Anxiety Disorder and Social Phobia, 2011).

To conclude, phobias are some kind of unnecessary fears and anxieties which can be treated with the help of medications, exposure therapy and behavioral therapies.

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