

PHOBIA

EDITORIAL

FEARS AND PHOBIAS - THE BATTLE WITHIN!

We all experience an emotion called fear. This is a basic survival instinct to respond when we feel unsafe or sense danger. The feeling might be mild, medium or strong varying from person to person and it can be brief or long lasting. Our brain and body react with something known as a 'fight or flight' response. Our body stays in this state till the brain sends an 'all clear' message.



Mostly the fear is healthy and people overcome this feeling. E.g. a person who doesn't know how to swim will be scared of deep water and will take due precautions like using a float and having a trainer around.

Phobia is an intense fear reaction to things or situations. With phobia, this fear is an out of proportion and irrational reaction to a potential danger. **The danger feels real and the bodily response can be very strong.** The person who experiences phobia starts avoiding certain situations and this might cripple his life and hamper personal growth. The situation may look trivial to others, but the impact on that individual is profound and real.

Phobia is not a choice, it is involuntary, manifested by deep-seated anxiety. The fear signal is vehement and the person perceives greater danger than it actually is. The brain which is conditioned due to past experiences, then gives a response to protect that person.

One can overcome phobia. It is not an easy task as here is no 'one-size-fits-all' solution. However, the first step is always acknowledgement and seeking professional help.

Let us get started by understanding phobias in detail.

ACCEPT, BREAK FREE AND CONQUER PHOBIAS!

Dr. Aabha Pimprikar
Co-Editor

PRESIDENT DR. SMITA HANTODKAR ROTARY CLUB OF AMARAVATI

Rtn. Dr. Smita Hantodkar, President of Rotary Club of Amravati is a woman of substance in a true sense. This charming, ever smiling 58 years old Dental Surgeon is always ready to spring in action.

Dr. Navin, her husband, is an Orthodontist. They have two lovely daughters. Dr. Rujuta, an Onco-gynaecologist, is married to Dr. Ameya, a Plastic Surgeon in Thane. Younger daughter Manali is M. A. Eng. Lit., B. Ed., and pursuing M.A. in Counselling Psychology and is married to Shrenik, a software engineer from BITS Pilani.



Smita starts her day with prayers and stretching exercise, followed by breakfast with the family. She never skips evening walks however hectic her day has been.

Her happiness mantra - **Taking the mind above the matter!** (so that you understand things better & then can "respond"!)

Smita has been associated with DAGMHI 3030 since its inception. She always believed that better mental health leads to a happy and healthy society and she thinks that DAGMHI 3030 gave her the right platform.

She has promoted and conducted many mental health programs in Amravati. She has given special emphasis on the Stress Awareness and Management Program which is one of the focus areas of DAGMHI 3030. Few of the beneficiaries have been Rotarians, Rotaractors, high school exam going students, NCC cadets, and staff of hospitals. She is grateful to Dr. Mohana Kulkarni, Dr. Vikram Wankhade, Dr. Komal Goenka and Dr. Kushal Zanwar for all their help and valuable time they have offered during these programs.

DAGMHI 3030 is very proud to have Rtn. Dr. Smita Hantodkar on the board. She will be serving as the honourable secretary of DAGMHI 3030 in the coming Rotary year.

Dr. Aabha Pimprikar
Co-Editor, President DAGMHI 3030

SERVICE IN ACTION

'Mind your Mind' workshops - Nagpur

Rotary Club of Nagpur Horizon has designed a need-based program 'MIND YOUR MIND'. This program focuses majorly on stress awareness; but addresses other concerns as well. The target audience are common people who experience stress in their daily lives.

President-Elect Rtn. Deoyani Shirkhedkar spearheads the project as the Trainer, while Rtn Vivek Garge is the Project Coordinator. They have been conducting these programs under the banner of DAGMHI 3030.

They have conducted more than 15 programs and touched more than 1000 attendees from diverse groups from various schools, colleges, Rotary clubs, JCI Clubs including few Government officials and Anganwadi Sevikas.

The club wants to make it a long-term, continuing series and conduct at least 50 programs in the coming Rotary year.

Rtn Deoyani Shirkhedkar
President Elect- Rotary Club of Nagpur Horizon



EMBRACE, LIBERATE, PREVAIL

*In the depths of fear, we find ourselves lost,
Bound by shadows, at great cost.
Yet within, courage begins to stir,
As we embrace the challenge, bold and sure.
Liberation beckons, a call to arms,
Breaking chains, dispelling alarms.
With each step forward, we reclaim our might,
And in freedom's glow, we find our light.
Prevailing over fear, we stand tall,
Defying doubts, breaking fear's thrall.
With hearts ablaze, and spirits unfurled,
We conquer fear, and seize the world.
So let us embrace, liberate, and prevail,
In the face of fear, we shall not fail.
For in the journey, we find our power,
To overcome fear's darkest hour.*

-Sripriya Shaji Ph.D
Counselling Psychologist & Nutritionist
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THE ORIGIN OF FEAR

Phobia, an outward depiction of inner anxiety, is simply understood as fear of a perceived threat (real or imaginary) and is all pervasive in our lives. By virtue of being human, the fear of death or something that resembles endings is innate to us. However, the intricacies of possible multiple causes behind the manifestation of fear are little understood. Psychology explains this association of fear with apparently neutral objects as displacement of psychic energies onto relatively smaller triggers, more acceptable to the conscious mind.

Whether the origins of these fears are genetically transmitted or intertwined with socio-cultural elements of upbringing, needs further speculation. Linkage studies suggest up to 60 percent heritance in the intergenerational transmission of phobia. Specific heritable characteristics in children prone to develop phobic disorders over their lifespan have been identified as 'behavioural inhibition' (tendency to withdraw in unfamiliar situations) and 'physiological hyperarousal' (heightened baseline physical health parameters and reactivity). These cause the person to experience more severe and frequent negative emotions.

Maternal expression of anxiety also influences anxious behaviours, especially in vulnerable children; those born with shy temperament and/or exposed to significant external stresses such as prolonged illness, moving schools or cities, or death of a loved one.

Summarising the myriad sensory, neurochemical, endocrine, environmental, autonomic, and behavioural aspects of aetiology in phobia could be a daunting task. While gene-environment interactions are incompletely understood, they both are known to have a cumulative effect on a person's mental health. The neural interplay between prefrontal cortex, amygdala, and hippocampus is the neuroanatomical basis for learning or unlearning of any conditioned stimulus, originally conceptualised by Ivan Pavlov.

The significant role of social learning in perpetuating fear responses cannot be overlooked. Fear is often unconsciously communicated by parents or caregivers to their offspring, either by overprotection from potential dangers in the world and/or by expressing anger towards the fears expressed by their children. Anger response from a model figure may act as a catalyst in magnifying the child's developing fear response. Psychosocial difficulties like ongoing conflicts within the family on the contrary have not been found to have a significant impact on the child's perception of fear.

Beyond logical reasoning and preconscious explanation for roots of fear in humans, there remains an unexplored dimension of where our innate behaviour patterns or psychological responses originate from. Epigenetic studies are yet to further explore the exact phenomena underlying gene modulation in fear response. We can also examine in depth the scientific evidence behind debatable therapies on regression or hypnosis, which dwell on the role of factors affecting our psychology beyond cognitive comprehension.

Dr. Bhakti Murkey

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SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF PHOBIA

Phobia is defined as an irrational fear of a specific object, situation or activity often leading to persistent avoidance of the feared object, situation or activity. For e.g. - I often see clients complaining of Claustrophobia where they cannot go inside closed spaces such as lifts or even use a shower, they feel they would be trapped and would die being struck in that place.

The signs and symptoms of phobia are divided into physical and psychological symptoms.

Physical symptoms

Some of the most common physical symptoms seen in phobias are -

Sweating; trembling; hot flushes or chills; difficulty in breathing; choking sensation; rapid heart beat; pain in chest; feeling of butterflies in stomach; nausea; dizziness and headaches; fainting; numbness of body; dryness of mouth; frequent urination; upset stomach; shivering; ringing of ears etc.

Psychological symptoms

The most common psychological symptoms of phobias are -

Constant fear of death; fear of losing control over self in some situation; cognitive distortion; hypervigilance; excessive thinking; loss of concentration and attention; confusion and disorientation; avoiding the situation altogether; loss of confidence in handling the situation etc.

Shalmaly Chatterjee,
Psychologist, Kolkata

CHECKLIST ON PHOBIA

* Think of the things/situations that make you anxious (E.g. Dog, Cockroach, Lizard, Elevators, Thunderstorm).

* Tick mark the question if the answer is 'yes'.

1. Do you feel extremely terrified when you come across these?
2. Do you feel symptoms like sweating, increased heart beats, trembling, difficulty in breathing?
3. Do you or people around you feel that these reactions are intense and extreme?
4. Do other people find these things/situations less scary?
5. Do you avoid or escape the things or situations that you are scared of?
6. Do you feel something horrible will happen to you in these situations?
7. If unavoidable, do you need help to cope? Other people, superstitious objects or medicines, even substance abuse?
8. Do you fear encountering these situations in the future?
9. Do you try to avoid or distract yourself from these thoughts?
10. Do you often 'look out' for the things that you are scared of?

If you answer 'yes' to most of the questions, there is a possibility that you are struggling with a phobia. Please contact your doctor or a mental health professional. Also talk to a trusted person.

(Adopted from psychologytools.com)

Dr. Aabha Pimprikar
Co-Editor

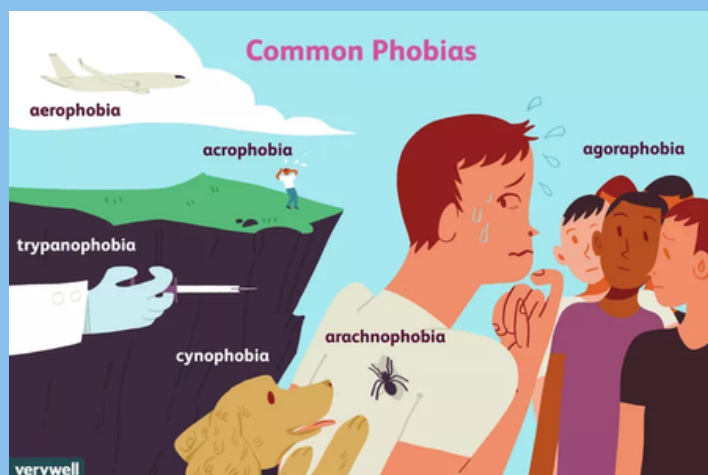


Illustration by Emily Roberts, Verywell

OVERCOMING FEARS: PSYCHOLOGICAL TREATMENTS FOR PHOBIA

Phobias may make one dysfunctional, maladjusted in society and career. It may hamper one's progress and growth, and therefore needs to be addressed immediately. Fortunately, there are effective psychological treatments and therapies designed to help individuals overcome their phobias and regain control of their lives.

1. Cognitive therapies including Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), operate on similar theoretical postulates in treating phobias. Both approaches target irrational thoughts and beliefs underlying phobic reactions. CBT helps individuals replace negative thoughts with rational ones, fostering confidence in confronting fears, while REBT challenges irrational beliefs, promoting a more rational outlook, and easing phobia-related distress. Through these cognitive interventions, individuals can diminish anxiety and engage in previously avoided activities with greater ease and confidence.

2. Exposure Therapy involves facing the feared object or situation in a systematic and controlled way. This exposure can take different forms, such as imagining the feared scenario, looking at pictures or videos related to the phobia, or gradually approaching the feared object or situation in real life. By repeatedly exposing themselves to what they fear most, level by level, individuals learn that their anxiety decreases over time, leading to a reduction in phobia-related symptoms.

3. Virtual Reality Therapy (VR) is a relatively new approach to treating phobias that involves using computer-generated simulations to recreate the feared environment. For example, Saro with a fear of flying might use VR technology to experience being on an aeroplane in a safe and controlled setting. This allows her to gradually confront her fears in a realistic yet controlled way, leading to desensitization and a reduction in anxiety.

4. Mindfulness-Based Therapies Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT), can also be helpful in managing phobias. For example, Preetha avoids walking due to fear of dogs (Cynophobia). She was taught to cultivate awareness of her thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations without judgment. By learning to observe her fear with curiosity and compassion, she gradually developed greater resilience and coping skills in the face of phobic triggers.

5. Relaxation Techniques Deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, and guided imagery, can help individuals manage the physical symptoms of anxiety associated with phobias. For example, Sam gets more anxious and tense when he enters the elevator. He should practice relaxation to get into exposure therapy.

By practicing these techniques regularly, individuals can reduce muscle tension, slow their heart rate, and calm their nervous system, making it easier to confront their fears in therapy.

6. Group Therapy can provide a supportive environment for individuals with phobias to share their experiences, learn from others, and practice coping skills together. In group therapy sessions, participants can receive encouragement, feedback, and validation from peers who understand what they are going through. This sense of camaraderie and shared experience can be empowering and motivating.

8. Medications play a role in treating phobias, often used in combination with other treatments.

9. Hypnotherapy Hypnosis can be used in managing anxiety and stress. Individuals can uncover underlying causes of their phobias and address conditioned responses to feared situations.

With the support of qualified professionals and a willingness to confront fears, individuals can reclaim control over their lives and live more fulfilling, anxiety-free existences.

-Sripriya Shaji Ph D

Counselling Psychologist & Nutritionist, Kozhikode, Kerala

PSY-BER MATTERS: CYBER PHOBIAS

The omnipresence of technology has given rise to anxiety-inducing scenarios which often go unrecognized by sufferers. This write-up aims to illuminate common cyber-related fears and offer initial coping strategies. Although each of the fears warrants individual in-depth discussion, by introducing them here I endeavor to lessen the anxiety among readers grappling with these issues.

1. Cyberchondria - Obsession of looking for symptoms on medical websites to self diagnose diseases, leading to excessive health worry.

2. FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) - Anxiety of social exclusion and of missing events after seeing online updates of friends.

4. Phishing Anxiety - Fear of online scams, leading to avoidance of online money transactions.

6. Cyber-Ostracism - Fear of online exclusion, anxiety about being unfriended or connection requests being rejected.

7. Cyberbullying Anxiety - Fear of online harassment and hurtful comments.

8. Cyberphobia - Irrational fear of computers and technology.

9. NoMoPhobia - Short form of 'No Mobile Phobia', which comes from not being able to use the mobile phone, even for the shortest amount of time.

In order to use the Internet, it is crucial to-

- Cultivate mindful online behavior and set boundaries to prevent overwhelming ourselves.
- Verify information from reputable sources and prioritize offline connections to maintain a healthy balance between virtual and real-life interactions.
- Practice self-care and stay informed about online threats and risks.
- Embrace technology responsibly while periodically practicing digital detox to foster healthier screen use.

Use **F.A.S.T. C.A.R and Secret Location** method developed by iMature EdTech.

F.A.S.T. protects you from cyber criminals -

F- FIREWALL, A- ANTIVIRUS, S- STRONG PASSWORDS, T- TRUST WITH CAUTION

C.A.R. protects you from cyber bullies and anti-social elements -

C - build **CONFIDENCE** to deal with cyber bullies (refer to the cyber cell)

A - **AVOID** anti social elements

R - **REPORT** against cyber bullies and anti social elements

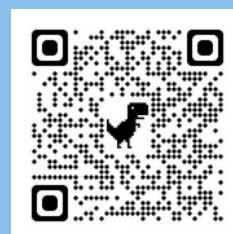
SECRET LOCATION

Refrain from sharing personal information on social media like home addresses, vacation plans and locations, to guard from real life criminals.

Dr. Geetanjali Jha,

Co editor Mind Matters,

Head of Cyberpsychology and Digital Parenting at iMature EdTech, Raipur



Scan this QR code to watch a short video on Phobia.

All five actors are in a phobias workshop. Their phobias include a fear of the word "Aagh!", a fear of apologies, a fear of repetition, and a fear of awkward silences.

PHOBIA: FILM REVIEW

A severe case of agoraphobia is brilliantly brought on screen in a Bollywood movie, 'Phobia'. Mehak the protagonist, develops **Agoraphobia** (a fear of being in situations where escape might be difficult) after being assaulted by a taxi driver, while returning from her Art Exhibition. She finds herself incapable of leaving her house. Her doctor tries to bring the outside world to her through virtual reality. Mehak tries her best to go around in a supermarket (using virtual reality) but panics as she sees people around and runs back to her room.

Her sister Anu is frustrated at this point because Mehak hasn't left the house in four months. She asks Mehak why she cannot even get herself to open the door for her nephew when he returns from school.

After this incident, Shaan- Mehak's friend and confidant, takes Mehak to a vacant apartment where she could stay until she recovers, hoping it will benefit her.

Here Mehak finds it difficult to even open the door for Shaan when he comes back with all the essentials for Mehak.

Mehak tries to open the door to take out the trash but fails as she hears someone coming from the elevator.

The next day, Mehak makes another effort and successfully steps outside her house to take out the trash.

The movie manages to properly depict how difficult it can be for any person having a specific phobia to go about their daily life. Mehak was a successful artist before she developed Agoraphobia, but now she finds it difficult to paint.

One of the other characters in the story, Nikki, has **Arachnophobia**, which is fear of spiders. (Just like Ronald Weasley from Harry Potter.)

Some famous people with Agoraphobia include Emily Dickinson, Sigmund Freud and Barbara Streisand. Barbara Streisand, an American actress and singer developed Agoraphobia after forgetting the lyrics to one of her own songs in front of a huge crowd in New York. It took her nearly 30 years to return to stage.

Sara Pimprikar

Mental Health Ally, Member of DAGMHI 3030

PHOBIA CROSSWORD

Each clue given below points to a phobia, the name of which you have to fill into the crossword below. In order to make your task easier, we have included the names of the phobias in a random order, at the end of the clues. Good luck placing the right phobia into the right place!

ACROSS -

7. Grandma refuses to believe she's in good health despite perfectly normal medical records.
8. Katie is mortified going to the doctor.
10. Mike washes his hands excessively due to his fear of contamination and germs.
11. Sarita refuses to go swimming as she is terrified of water.
12. Harish falls ill if he is asked to go out and do some work around the town.
13. Kiyaan is extremely scared of darkness.

DOWN -

1. Lisa turns pale with fright at the sight of blood.
2. Malti starts shivering in fear when she sees a dog.
3. Jatin almost fainted due to fear when he saw a snake.
4. Ahaan is terrified of going to the dentist.
5. Riya is extremely scared of spiders.
6. My mom panics if she has to travel in an airplane.
9. My husband stands very far from the gas stove if he comes into the kitchen.

HINT -

Hypochondria; Hydrophobia; Hemophobia; Arachnophobia; Ophidiophobia; Pyrophobia; Odontophobia; Mysophobia; Nyctophobia; Trypanophobia; Agoraphobia; Cynophobia; Aerophobia

BY Dr. Geetanjali Jha

IS THE SKY TOO FAR ???

Once there lived a young chirpy girl named Esha. With her contagious smile she could light up even the darkest of rooms. However, Esha harboured a secret burden that few knew about – she suffered from a **debilitating fear of heights, known as acrophobia**.

This fear had plagued Esha since childhood, the result of a traumatic experience when she got stuck at the top of a tall tree during a game of hide-and-seek. Ever since that day, even standing on a chair would send shivers down her spine.

As Esha grew older, her phobia also grew. Simple tasks like crossing a bridge or riding an elevator became paralyzing ordeals. She avoided amusement parks, hiking trails, and even tall buildings at all costs.

All her efforts to conceal her fear were in vain. Esha never summoned the courage to confront her fear head-on. So, her life became haggard from all avenues. Her friends initially used to invite her for outdoor activities – but she always declined giving them lame excuses. Her friends grew frustrated with her reluctance to participate in activities, and some even distanced themselves. Little did they know of her anxiety.

Her fear not only hindered her growth but also strained her relationships.

One day, a job opportunity arose with the plush office at the towering skyscraper. Despite her apprehension, she couldn't let fear dictate her future any longer. Summoning every ounce of courage within her, Esha decided to confront her phobia head-on.

With the support of her only friend, Esha sought therapy to overcome her fear of heights. Through gradual exposure and cognitive-behavioural techniques, she learned to manage her anxiety and challenge her limiting beliefs.

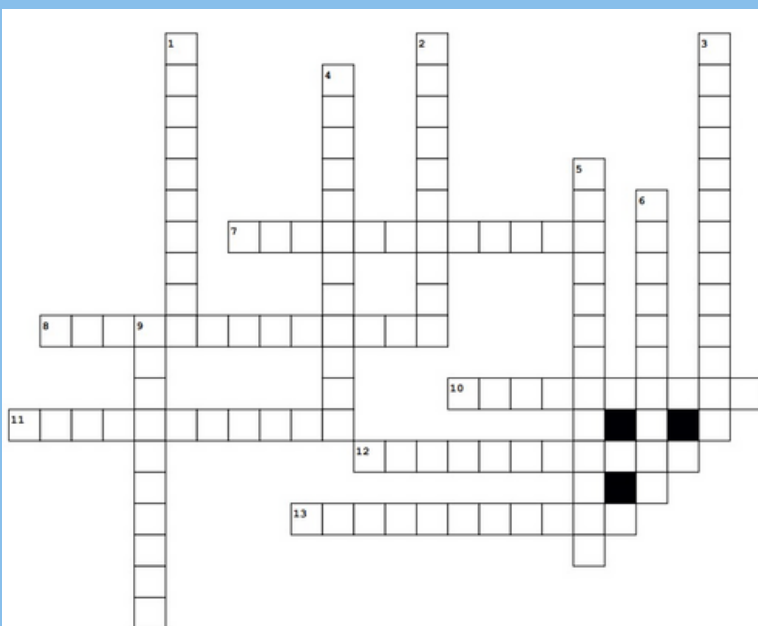
It wasn't easy, and there were a lot of setbacks. Baby steps like – stepping onto an observation deck, riding an elevator to the top floor – Esha felt her confidence grew.

Eventually, Esha stood atop a skyscraper, gazing out at the sprawling city below, a sense of accomplishment washing over her. At that moment, she realized that her phobia no longer controlled her life. She was free to chase her dreams and embrace all that the world had to offer.

She may have started with a phobia, but through determination and resilience, she conquered it. And as she stepped into the unknown, she knew that the sky was no longer the limit – it was just the beginning of her extraordinary journey.

Shivangi Garg

HR Recruiter, Certified Trainer – Child Safety & Sex Abuse



Phobias are repressed, or displaced, desires and fears.
-Sigmund Freud