

## What Fears Do You Have?

When you give a presentation, do you feel so nervous that you believe you could jump out of your skin or be sick to your stomach? Or, do you use any excuse you can, not to fulfill your obligations? You may be experiencing a phobia. Phobias include anxiety disorders, such as fear of enclosed spaces, claustrophobia; fear of spiders or animals, acrophobia; fear of flying, pterygophobia; or fear of water, hydrophobia, just to name a few. A phobia is a persistent irrational fear of an object or a situation that's generally considered harmless, according to Mayo Clinic. Besides specific phobias, one can experience social phobias. It consists of more than shyness and involves one being excessively self conscious with a fear that the public is scrutinizing you.

Signs and symptoms displayed include persistent irrational fears of a specific object, activity or situation. An individual will exhibit uncontrolled anxiety in response, through sweating, heart palpitations, an uneasy panicky feeling, avoidance behavior or difficulty breathing. One might experience irrational feelings that are out of proportion to the stimulus or there might be feelings of anxiousness from just anticipating an encounter.

There are complications that one might encounter if experiencing phobias. An individual may not want to engage in social activities and deliberately avoid social and public places. Because there maybe avoidance in social and public situations, one may become depressed because they feel isolated by

their feelings. To deal with the stress of the phobias, an individual may turn to drugs and alcohol to make them feel better, which can lead to drug abuse.

Various drug treatments are available to help control phobias. Medications used maybe; sedatives, beta blockers or antidepressants. Sedatives used are benzodiazepines to help with relaxation. This would include, but not limited to, Librium, Xanax, Valium or Ativan. The beta blockers used are to help by controlling the stimulation of adrenaline when experiencing an episode of a phobia. This drug controls heart palpitations, shakiness, increased blood pressure and voice and limb shaking. The antidepressants used reduce anxiety by controlling serotonin levels that influence mood. These include Prozac, Celexa, Paxil, Zoloft just to name a few. All of which must be prescribed by a physician.

Another form of treatment used is behavioral therapy. In behavioral therapy, desensitization is used in an attempt to change your response to the feared object or situation. It usually involves repeated exposures to the stimulant. Cognitive behavior therapy can also be used. This therapy involves you and your therapist learning ways to view and cope with the feared object or situation at hand. It is an attempt to acquire new beliefs about the situation feared.

You can also act on reducing your phobias by making your own strategies. First, take action, determine what makes you anxious. Then try not to dwell on the past and let it go. Start anew. If you are feeling anxious, take a brisk walk or partake in a hobby. Make sure you get a lot of rest, eat a balanced diet and try relaxation techniques. Avoid excess caffeine and nicotine which

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can lead to anxiety. Another idea would be to share your concerns with a trusted friend or counselor; someone you can trust. Check with the Dearborn County Hospital or Community Mental Health agencies about any available support groups concerning phobias.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns, eMail me at [gheffelmire@dearborncounty.in.gov](mailto:gheffelmire@dearborncounty.in.gov)