

PHOBIAS

Learning Outcomes:

On successful completion of this module the candidate will be able to:

- Show a basic understanding of phobias
- Have an understanding of the possible causes of phobia
- Understand terms used
- Understand that anyone can experience a phobia
- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of how a phobia affects the individual, their life and their family
- Describe how different ways of thinking and behaving can affect phobias
- Understand how phobias can be managed and know some of the resources available to support the individual experiencing a phobia

What is a Phobia?

Most of us will have had some experience of what fear is like. Something may have happened to make us feel afraid or we may have been frightened at the prospect of something terrible happening to us, or to those close to us. Afterwards the feelings of fear and panic recede when the danger we sensed passes, and in time we may no longer remember just how intense and overwhelming those feelings were.

Activity 16 in your Activities and Self-Assessment Workbook relates to the section above

Someone who has a phobia, however, tends to experience uncontrollable feelings of panic and fear which may seem irrational to other people. Usually the fears seem irrational to the sufferer too. These feelings are deeply distressing and can dominate that person's life.

What does a Phobia feel like?

One of the main features of a phobia is an exaggerated and persistent fear, which is irrational or unreasonable, in response to an object or a situation. Other features may include:

- The same response to the object or situation each time we encounter it, or imagine being faced with it
- Understanding that our fear is irrational

- Inability to challenge our fear of the object or situation, even though we know it is irrational
- Feelings of anxiety, even panic, when faced with the situation or object
- Avoidance of the feared situation or object
- Fear interferes with normal everyday activities and function. Social activities and relationships may be affected and we can be distressed about having the phobia
- We are not generally anxious in most other circumstances-the fear is associated with that particular object or situation

Activity 17 in your Activities and Self-Assessment Workbook relates to the section above

Different studies have produced ranges of results about how many people are affected by phobias. Phobias are estimated to affect between 5 and 25% of the population. Phobias affect people of all age groups and backgrounds, both men and women.

There are many different types of phobia. Some are very specific and others can be more general, called social phobias.

Specific phobias may include a fear of spiders or snakes. Women are about twice as likely as men to suffer from a specific phobia. Specific phobia is the most common mental health disorder among women and the second most common mental health disorder in men. (The most common in men is substance misuse)



The most common specific phobias are animals/ insects (most common), then storms, heights, illness, injury and death (the least common).

(Kaplan and Sadock, 2000)

Activity 18a in your Activities and Self-Assessment Workbook relates to the section above

Social (general) phobias may include a fear of meeting people (social phobia), a fear of being in enclosed spaces (claustrophobia), or a fear of leaving the safety of a known place or situation (agoraphobia). Specific phobia is more common than social phobia.



Activity 18b in your Activities and Self-Assessment Workbook relates to the section above

What causes a Phobia?

It is not always possible to pinpoint what causes someone to develop a phobia. We may be able to recall a particular event or situation in our past which led to our developing a fear of something specific, such as the dark.

Very often, however we won't know how or why it started. It may be a reaction to difficulties we face in our day-to-day lives such as relationship problems, employment, money or housing worries. It may be the result of a major loss or upset in our lives, such as a bereavement, redundancy, divorce or separation.

If we are very anxious or apprehensive about some impending change, or are generally unsure of our ability to cope we are more likely to be vulnerable to stress and may develop a phobia as a result. Even if we don't understand what exactly caused us to develop a phobia, we can learn how to combat it.

If phobias are not challenged we may find that gradually we avoid the activities or the places that are likely to trigger our panic. If we have agoraphobia, we may stay more and more within our own four walls. If we have a fear of meeting people, we will do all we can to avoid contact with others. We may end up becoming more and more isolated as we withdraw from friends and from activities we used to be involved in.

Activity 19 in your Activities and Self-Assessment Workbook relates to the section above

One of the things other people find hard to understand is just how difficult it is for us to overcome our fears. Indeed it can be very frustrating to want to do something, yet at the same time feel we simply can't, that we are powerless to change.

We may also be plagued with guilt about the effects our difficulties are having on those close to us. It may be that we rely a great deal on others to do the things we find impossible, and to cover up for us. This can create a lot of tension - we may feel bad about 'using' them in this way and at the same time resent needing their help. People who have a phobia can become very depressed by their whole situation.

How can a Phobia be managed?

There are steps we can take to help ourselves escape from this situation. Whatever type of phobia we experience (and some people have more than one phobia), if we start to address our fears we can begin to tackle the irrational response. What works will be different for each person but there are many sources of help and advice available.

PHOBIAS - MODULE 3

Self-Assessment Questionnaire

Please complete the following self-assessment exercises.

1. Give a definition of phobias.

2. What are the 2 main groups of phobias?

3. Give 3 examples of a specific phobia.

4. Give 3 examples of a social phobia.

5. Give 5 examples of self-help for phobias.

6. Give 4 examples of possible treatment of phobias.

SAMPLE

When you have completed this self-assessment, make an appointment with your tutor to check your answers and sign off below. Then move on to complete the Activities for Module 3.

Tutor Signature: _____ Date: _____

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

PHOBIAS – MODULE 3

ACTIVITY 16

Give an example of a time when you felt fearful. What caused it? What was the experience like?

ACTIVITY 17

Give one example of an object or situation which you dislike or fear. Do you choose to avoid this? Do you feel your normal life and routine is affected by this fear?

ACTIVITY 18

- a. Imagine you have a friend who has a specific phobia of flying. How could this affect their ability to lead a normal life? What efforts might they make to avoid facing this fear?

- b. Imagine you have a friend who has the social phobia of agoraphobia. How could this affect their ability to lead a normal life? What efforts might they make to avoid facing this fear?

ACTIVITY 19

Imagine you have a friend who has the social phobia of agoraphobia. How could you help your friend in their efforts to face this fear?

ACTIVITY 20

Imagine you are recovering from a phobia. Give examples of the self-help steps you might choose to take to help yourself recover.

ACTIVITY 21

Give details of the local resources and treatments that would be available to you, or a friend/ family member, if you were experiencing phobias. You may have to visit your local library or Health Advice Centre, or use the internet if you have access, to find this information.

Now ask your tutor to check this section and provide feedback. You should both sign below, when you agree that the results of your activities meet the required standard. Now move on to Module 4.