

Phobias

Phobias are irrational fears. Phobias occur in various forms: specific phobias, social phobia (Social Anxiety Disorder), and agoraphobia.

Specific phobias are irrational fears of a particular object or situation. They occur in 1 out of 10 people and examples include fears related to snakes, dog, closed in tight places, and heights. Other simple phobias include irrational fears of blood, bridges, freeways, and tunnels. These phobias appear more commonly in women and are treatable with psychotherapy.

Social Phobia, also known as Social Anxiety Disorder, is an intense fear of being humiliated or embarrassed in social situations. This disorder is not the same as shyness. In social phobia, the dread of a social event can begin weeks in advance and become debilitating.

Agoraphobia, which frequently accompanies panic disorder, is a fear of being in a situation that might provoke a panic attack or from which escape might be difficult should the need arise. Agoraphobia may limit an individual's ability to travel only to certain areas called comfort zone, or people may become essentially housebound.

If the source of the phobia or fear is easy to avoid, people may not feel the need for treatment. Sometimes, however, phobias may influence important personal or career decisions. All types of phobias may be effectively treated with psychotherapy and/or a combination of psychotherapy and medications.