

Phobias - Strange But Simple, Terrible But Treatable

IF you have a **phobia**, or know someone who has, you may have been baffled by it, or feel helpless in its grasp. This article will tell you what phobias are, how they are created, and most importantly, how to get rid of them.

Phobias... a quick definition

A phobia is a high anxiety response to an object, situation, or even a thought. Because the phobic trigger can be absolutely anything (we've had balloons, belly buttons and goldfish among the more unusual ones!), phobias can seem ridiculous, absurd or even funny. For the phobic person however, the intensity of terror can be disabling and horrific. The good news is that phobias are simple to understand and usually easy and quick to treat.

Types of Phobia - Specific or Not

About one in ten people have a **specific phobia**. A specific phobia is an intense fear triggered by a particular object or situation. This can be literally anything - from spiders to balloons, buttons to fish.

A **non-specific phobia** is a more generalised fear such as agoraphobia (fear of open spaces). They work in a similar way to specific phobias, in that the fear appears to be 'attached' to something less discrete.

Surely That's Irrational?

Since often phobias cause people to be scared of non-threatening objects, they are often seen as irrational.

And, in a way, that's right. A phobia has nothing to do with the thinking, rational part of the brain.

A phobic response is simply a survival mechanism 'gone wrong'. The phobic is otherwise perfectly normal and can often see the irrationality of their phobic reaction. This, however, rarely helps the sufferer. Well meaning attempts to talk someone out of a phobia nearly always end in failure.