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Dealing with Phobias

By Marion Udall

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About the Author

Marion Udall has seen the dramatic effects that phobias have on people.

Marion knows that many people cannot understand why some of their friends or even members of their wider family have great trouble dealing with everyday tasks and problems which are no trouble for them.

She has written “Dealing with Phobias” to help people that have phobias learn about resources which are available to help them and to inform people that are not, as far as they know affected, to better understand and maybe even help their friends, family and colleagues who are.

Marion said, “[Doctors](#) and researchers are not entirely in agreement about some aspects of the causes and effects of phobias and there are no cures which can be applied to all the [people](#) that suffer from any particular one.”

“But, there is plenty of evidence that phobias need to be taken seriously because of the effects on the people that have them and the people they deal with as well as the cost to the community from their impairment and lost productivity.”

Marion’s particular interest is in finding practical ways to help the people involved. She hopes that her ebook will be valuable for reducing the effects on individuals and families by giving reassurance, encouraging them to seek help and support and suggest strategies which may help them when they try to start to deal better with their phobias and reduce the effects.

Marion said, “My [book](#) does not offer a cure or any sort of magic bullet.”

“But, I believe that my plain [language](#) explanations and suggestions can help you to better understand what phobias are and learn from the experiences of other people.”

Knowledge is [power](#). Marion’s ebook can help you to deal with your own phobias or support those who you care about who are affected.

Read, learn and use the ideas so you can enjoy every day a little better with your work, social activities, family and other important [relationships](#).

How My Ebook Can Help

I have seen the effects on friends and family members from different phobias.

I noticed that many sufferers were also discouraged by the reaction of some of their friends, family and other people they interacted with.

I cannot offer you any [cures](#) but I believe that the information which I gathered from people in a wide range of backgrounds and the research I did may help you whatever your situation and particular circumstances.

My ebook will help you to understand how phobias develop and what you can do yourself to manage them.



Whether you are a person who has a problem with phobias and their effects or you have a close friend or [family](#) member that you want to help, my ebook will help you to get an overview of phobias, the terms which are used and the very damaging effects which they can have on people.

I hope you will also understand that there is hope, but that relieving or removing the problem will take effort and time.

This [book](#) will help you to understand the terms which are used and give you some basic information about the resources which are available to you.

One important benefit is that you will have a clearer idea about what to ask your [doctor](#) or other professional and be able to understand the information they give you.

This may save you a lot of time when you seek professional support. That can mean that you will get more and better targeted information during a session.

It will also help you to make better decisions about the real value in your particular circumstances of claims which are made by companies and individuals – whether they are focused on helping you or just helping themselves.

What Causes Phobias

Researchers are still [working](#) out the causes of various phobias.

It is generally accepted that phobias have developed from behaviors that helped previous generations to survive and thrive in their time, but which we cannot apply in our time. A classic example is the "fight or flight" response to real or imagined threats.

But, neither I nor anyone else can say that something is guaranteed accurate in this area.

Many well-established views are being re-examined as more research reveals inconsistencies in the old theories.

Some researchers are now stating that some phobias which were thought to be the result of environmental factors, such as the information, attitudes and actions of people around the person who develops the phobia, may have some genetic basis.



It is likely that, if someone has a phobia [problem](#), their immediate and extended family are likely to have a higher proportion of people with phobias than a similar sample of the general population.

It is probably worth pointing out that this seems to be a reasonable assumption, but it is not a proven fact. It would be hard to do a test for this because of the wide variation in the make-up of the population in different areas. Taking a statement like this as a proven fact is an example of how false statements can become so credible that people let it seriously influence their thoughts and behavior. That can result in problems such as phobias when the "fact" relates to important issues and actions.

It is clear that events which conflict with our beliefs in us can have a dramatic effect on our future behavior.

If we are rejected in some of our early attempts to join groups of our social

peers or connect with someone we are attracted to, it can cause ongoing problems for us which we may suffer from through the rest of our lives.

This may cause physical reactions which then affect our [confidence](#) even more.

That can make us less able to succeed with future attempts or become less willing to try.

The effects of stress are sometimes more pronounced in people with phobias and many of them reduce those effects by avoiding the action or situation where they encountered the [pressure](#) which caused their [stress](#) the first time.

Of course, this limits their ability to enjoy all that might be available to them in their personal life or [career](#), so the impact of that decision on them can be profound.

A person may be so deeply affected by one incident which has a negative outcome that they will avoid similar events in any way they can. The dangers of such generalizations are obvious but it happens to many people.

We are also sometimes limited by beliefs associated with advice and instructions given to us by parents and other authority figures in our earlier years.

[Children](#) are particularly susceptible to faulty conditioning through this and it can have serious effects on them and their families for generations afterward.

Children and Phobias

All of us are facing more pressures, both personal and in our working lives, than we ever have.

I have heard people say that our [children](#) have it much easier when dealing with the rapid advances in technology and other changes in society because they are able to learn about the marvels and mysteries of modern technology in small steps, while protected from the [stress](#) which we adults face with trying to use them for our work and daily existence usually without any training.



But, the world we live in now is still a source of great stress for all children. Some are living in dire circumstances and many face an uncertain future.

Some pressures which our children face are different but they can be just as severe in their effects. Most of the stressful problems which our children are confronted with are much the same as children like us had when we were growing up. But, the rapid pace of change and the expansion of all-seeing and all-revealing media mean that many children are forced to confront the detailed description of various social and ethical problems at an earlier [age](#) than may be good for their development.

Children can be affected by these problems and suffer from the effects through their whole lives, so I will include the best information which I have for you to learn from and use.

Common Childhood Phobias

Personal

Fear of the Dark

One of the most common phobias which can seriously affect children, and often the whole family, is a fear of the dark.

There is often a demand that a parent stay with them because the child “knows” there are bad things which come out when the child is alone and the [light](#) is turned off.



Many parents can often remember their own childhood and this sort of problem occurring with themselves or their siblings.

They may be torn between the desire to comfort their child and the possibilities that they might hold back their child’s personal development if they become too protective.

We have to remember that the fear which children feel is real to them.

They may see shadows cast on the walls of their room and not be able to connect them with the familiar objects which cast them. Even their toys may take on a fearsome appearance in their [imagination](#) after the light goes out.

One factor which seems to have increased this problem is the exposure of young and very impressionable children on TV shows and other entertainment which contains themes and events that have a greater effect on the children than they may on older people.

Even news programs which we may watch with our children can have a bad effect because they often feature death and disaster.

I’m no fan of heavy censorship, but we probably need to think seriously about what our very young children watch.

To help children cope with this sort of fear, we can give them some enjoyable

experiences which will include them being in the dark.

You might try sitting with them in your yard or even just looking out the window as the sun sets and pointing out how different the area around their [home](#) looks when the light changes.

A friend got an old [book](#) about making hand shadows.

She got a little practice in front of a desk lamp and then showed her children some. She pointed out how the shape of her small hands made huge figures appear on the wall or a white sheet which she tacked to it. If you do something like the hand shadows, you might also put one of their animal toys in front of the light to show them how it can make big, strange shadows which are nothing to worry about.

When the child is ready for bed, use that or another of their favorite toys and tell them that toy will be watching out for them while they are asleep.

A low-powered nightlight which switches on automatically when the light in their room is reduced is usually a good idea.

If you have older children, ask them to help the younger child by not doing or saying anything which might encourage them to be fearful of the dark.

Separation Anxiety



This is one of the most common fears which children suffer from.

It shows as unwillingness to do anything which will mean that the child is apart from their parents or the person responsible for their care.

They may want you to stay with them after they go to bed, become sick for no apparent reason when you go to [work](#) or have to leave them for any reason, or exhibit high stress levels just at the thought of being apart from

you.

This condition obviously can have serious implications for the whole family as well as the child themselves.

This condition can last for years and most of the children it affects seem to get better at managing the symptoms. But, the researchers suggest that many of these children do have problems with depression in later years which may be caused in part by the earlier episodes with this condition.

This condition may respond over time, but you will have to consider the possible long-term effects of letting the child dictate the amount of time you are away from them.

I would seriously consider talking to your doctor or other [health](#) professional who knows your particular circumstances, so that you get advice which is tailored for your child and your family.

Problems at School

If your school-age child is showing this sort of problem, ask their school for a referral to a counselor if they don't have one or more actually on staff. These counselors have considerable experience with this condition in children at all levels in the [school](#).

Sometimes, parents try to tackle what appear to be phobias by looking for the cause and possible remedies in the home when the problem has its roots in the child's attitude and experiences at their school.

If you get the cooperation of experienced school staff, they may be able to find out whether the child's problem is perhaps based on social problems they are experiencing at school, rather than the fear of separation.

It's common for [children](#) to have problems finding good friends or fitting in with particular groups or their peers in the school community. But, they are often unwilling to tell their parents about any such problems which they are having.

Bullying: Another widely prevalent problem is bullying. This is sometimes kept from the child's parents by the school as well as the child.

This problem can cause similar symptoms to those described above.

Since the causes are quite different, it is important that you find out which one you need to deal with.

Coping with bullying is beyond the scope of this book but you could ask the eBookwholesaler member that supplied this [book](#) to you about a relevant ebook they can get for you.

Problems with Schoolwork: You may also find that some problems which your [children](#) have are caused by difficulties with some of their schoolwork. There is often considerable pressure on teachers and other staff to ensure that all their students progress through the grades. The [school's](#) level of basic funding is often linked to this, which creates more pressure for the staff and the students.

It can cause some students to be overwhelmed by material which they aren't ready for.

It can sometimes be hard to find which factors are causing your child's problems, but it is important that you persevere for the child's future prospects and well-being.

You may find allies among other parents or even certain [teachers](#).

But, your best resource is your own children. If you focus on maintaining communication and mutual respect, you will be well equipped for helping your child to deal with their problems.

That will also help them to be ready and help them to deal with problems which they will inevitably face in future years.

How to help Your Children

Please don't take anything in this book as being aimed at you.

I am just sharing lessons I've learned from personal experience and others from conversations with other parents and through my research.

I hope you may find this section helpful.

If you disagree with my comments, that's fine. Sometimes, just seeing a different point of view can help us to review our own attitudes and maybe get a boost to our own [self-confidence](#) that we have helped our family to avoid some or all of the problems which I mention.

All parents want to help their children have a good [life](#) with all possible opportunities available to them.

That's one of the most common reasons which people give for the extra effort which they put into their work even when the pay is low and benefits to them personally are below what they might have got a few years ago.

When you think that your children are worried, you want to help them and will probably do almost anything which you think might help them.

Home Base

There is one factor which some parents don't think enough about. The parents' own problems, whether personal or work related and discord in their family, can be a major factor in their child developing problems which seem to be unsolvable.

Your first step should be to look as closely as you can at the situation in your [home](#), especially the relationships between all of the family.

Many children who have been taken to get professional help have revealed that the main concerns they have are related to problems of various family members which they are strongly affected by.

Their parents may shower them with gifts and outings, but the child may still feel an emotional gap between them. This can affect their early development and also may be a factor in their own personal and family relationships years later.

Sometimes, other children in the family may be part of the problem. This is because of a perception of unequal treatment, wanting to create and maintain a superior position in the family structure or many other factors.

Some family members, including the parents may have phobias or related problems which affect how they interact with the child. Their behavior, due to their own problems, may influence the child to believe that type of action or attitude is okay, especially if it gets more attention or other benefits for the other family member.

Before we can really hope to make headway with helping our child with their problems, we should review our own attitude and behaviors so that the child knows we will support them and advise them well during those first difficult years.

Parents with Style

Parenting is probably the most important task anyone can take on with not being required to have any special training or to pass any sort of formal test.



Yet, we have the responsibility for the lives and well-being of each of our [children](#). What we do, say, or do not do or say can have a profound effect on them through their whole lives!

We jump in with great excitement and an honest desire to be the best parent which our child could ever hope for.

But, most of us have nothing more than our recollection of how we and our siblings were

treated by our own parents to guide us.

Sometimes, that works very well. We either got good [training](#) or were able to adjust our attitudes to help our children more than our parents were able to help us, for whatever reason.

I’ve found that the following styles are fairly common among parents I know or have heard about.

Ruler: Many parents who had strict parents themselves feel that the best way to teach their children to deal with fears and uncertainty is to encourage them to face their problems, real and imaginary, head on and never, never look for someone to fix it for them or even help them to deal with it.

Sometimes, we need to be firm about certain things which our children want or don’t want to be involved in. But, like anything, this attitude can cause real and lasting problems when it is overdone.

I remember a neighbor who demanded that his children face their fears, whether it was being alone after their bedroom light was turned off or learning to swim by their own efforts.

Permissive: At the other end of the spectrum, many parents want their

children to have everything which they felt they were denied in their own childhood. My aunt described this as “an attitude of unlimited entitlement” which she believed was the worst possible gift anyone could give their child. This will become a problem for the child because they will find at some point that the people they want to be with don’t give in to their every whim. When that happens, the problems can be serious and their parents will probably no longer be able to deal with them on their grown children’s behalf.

Protective: All parents want to keep their children safe and happy. Taken to extremes this can prevent their children from [developing](#) any resilience which would help them to deal with the minor bumps which we all encounter on a daily basis.

This can also happen with [animals](#) in the wild. When female turtles lay their eggs in sand which is well away from the high tide mark, they are protecting the eggs from being washed away before the young turtles are ready to hatch. But, they also expose the newly hatched turtles to attack from every kind of predator as they scurry from their nest over the exposed sand to the sea.

Some “kind” people think that we should arrange for the turtles to be carried to the edge of the sea.

But that would cause more problems:

- The general [health](#) of the turtle population would suffer. That mad dash over the sand help the surviving turtles to get their legs stronger before they start swimming.
- There would probably be an oversupply of turtles that year which would put [pressure](#) on the available [food](#) supply.
- The gulls and other predators need their share of young turtles, so that they can continue to keep the ocean as clean as possible of the refuse which they consume.

By the way, I like turtles!

Introduction to Phobias

Some professionals resist calling some of the problems which I mention in this ebook phobias. They will refer to some as [anxiety](#) conditions or other terms.

That’s fine for professionals, but my focus is about covering problems which are often called phobias by people such as myself.

My reason for putting all the conditions in this [book](#) is because I want to offer help to anyone with a problem which has similarities to phobias.

The simplest definition of phobias I have is that phobias are a strong fear of an activity, object or item, or a situation.

The affected person suffers from the fear and other feelings which come from:

- Their inability to deal with it as easily as they know other people can.
- The perceived or actual negative reaction of other people to their problem.
- Ongoing depression due to their fear that the problem will affect them for the rest of their lives

That definition can also cover “anxiety conditions”. So, for convenience, I will use the terms interchangeably here.

Phobias are often grouped according to symptoms which some of them share. These groups are useful, but the effectiveness of the various methods of relieving or removing the problem for each phobia is usually dependent to some degree on the particular individual who is affected.

The way that phobias are grouped, which I think is probably the most useful, is for people to put them into three main groups:

Social Phobias: These are the phobias which involve interaction with other people. That is a very big collection which I will [focus](#) a lot of attention on because of their widespread and serious effects.

Situational Phobias: This covers problems people have when they fear that they will be in a particular environment.

Specific Phobias: This covers those phobias which relate to one item or situation, such as fear of a particular creature or being treated by a dentist.

Many people's particular phobia might be slotted into more than one of the groups. I find this set-up convenient when thinking about phobias and preparing my notes, but it would not be sufficiently accurate for professional use.

Effects of Phobias

Phobias and the related [anxiety](#) conditions can cause sufferers to [sweat](#) excessively, become nauseous or dizzy and become unable to complete even simple tasks.

These are just some of the visible signs of a phobia. The more destructive effects are not always as obvious.

But, anyone who has a phobia is likely to have to live with reduced comfort, enjoyment, and without much hope of improvement in their situation.

This is a common cause of serious depression which can be compounded by the reaction of people around them who believe that anybody should be able to cope with these problems by just a change in attitude or something which seems as simple to accomplish.

The effects of the phobia are likely to become progressively more serious.

The effects on their general [health](#) can cause them to withdraw from a lot of [social](#) activity and be unable to perform as well or even adequately in their work.

They may lose opportunities for more interesting and better rewarded work or even their [job](#) because of their difficulties and the effect they may have on other employees or when they interact with clients and suppliers.

Some research suggests that serious medical problems such as heart [disease](#) are much more common in people that have suffered from a phobia of some kind.

There are some things which we can do as individuals to reduce the effects, but anyone that feels they cannot cope should seek some professional advice.

The first step might be simply consulting your doctor.

Most general practitioners have some knowledge of these areas. They have found it useful in helping to deal with the wide range of people they treat.

That group will inevitably contain a number of people with phobias of varying levels of risk.

Fear can be good for you

Fear is a natural reaction to potential danger.



It may be a response to an actual threat or one that the person believes is real, even though it is not, (that's called a perceived danger).

We have all inherited our ancestors' tendency to either [fight](#) or take flight when there is danger.

That kept most of them alive a bit longer and can do the same for us in a really dangerous situation like crossing the highway.

It still can [help](#) us in a truly dangerous situation by making us more aware of what is happening and preparing our [body](#) to respond to the best of our ability.

We need to be aware of situations which could actually happen in the area where we live and work.

But, many people develop this into a fear about things which are either very unlikely or even completely imaginary.

When Fear Becomes a Problem

There are two main ways in which our natural instinct to protect ourselves becomes a problem which some people cannot handle.

The first is when we become frustrated and depressed because we are unable to deal with a situation effectively.

In our modern world, we aren't always able to use either of the innate options - fight or flee.

This inability to do what our instincts tell us are necessary can cause us to lock the fear inside ourselves.

Then, unless we are aware of the risks, we will often focus on the frustration. Over time, this behavior becomes a habit and many of us focus on the unrelieved [pain](#) inside us instead of the many good things in our lives.

After repeated but often quite minor incidents, that frustration and repressed anger starts to affect our mental state, our general well-being and eventually, our state of [health](#).

This makes it more difficult for us to handle the [challenges](#) which pop up in our lives. That increases our frustration and causes us to doubt our ability to handle future problems.

We plant this idea of our own weakness in our subconscious and feed it more doubt and desperation almost every day. This makes it harder for us to turn around our current path to guaranteed disappointment, because we keep [hearing](#) our own [mind](#) repeating the negativity we fed it.

People start [fights](#) over something as minor as being cut off by an ignorant driver. Others will repress their desire to take physical revenge and then start to doubt their own self-worth because they were afraid to act.

The other problem is when we exaggerate a possible danger beyond its likely significance in our lives.

As an example, some people may have a fear of being attacked by a dangerous snake. That may be understandable.

That sort of fear only becomes a problem when they become fearful of being attacked by a snake even when they never visit areas where dangerous snakes live.

First Steps to Recovering Your Life

If you are suffering a poorer quality of [life](#) because of fear about anything, be assured that there are ways to reduce or even eliminate the problem.

Research has confirmed that the effect of many phobias can be significantly reduced by fairly simple means.

But, that is usually hard for people that have a phobia to accept.

It is also well-known that we often tend to prefer to endure the negative aspects of our current situation rather than trying to change our circumstances for the better, especially where we have been disappointed by the results of our previous efforts.

Many people are strongly discouraged from seeking improvements in their lives because they fear causing further damage to their connections with the people closest to them, and the reaction from those around them if they do not succeed in making any positive changes.

The most important thing which drives most people to actively seek change for the better, is the realization that letting the problem continue to affect their lives will mean that their situation will get worse and their ability to make any effective change will never be better than it is currently.

I hope that this [book](#) will help make that point clear to many readers because it could be the trigger for positive action they have wanted to start for some time.

Another factor which often holds us back is that we believe that our situation is unique and probably unsolvable.

Like the people of earlier times who believed those who said that the earth was flat, we are limited by our lack of real knowledge of the situation.

After reading this ebook, you will understand that, whatever your current situation, there are means of getting help and even full recovery.

You might have to adapt your familiar routines to limit the effects of any tendency to slip back into your previous negative patterns, but that's still much better than being in the grip of a phobia all the time.

We see media reports of problems with various treatments. But, the media usually have little interest in reporting the many successes that people who have suffered with phobias for years achieve every day.



A lot of people get to the point of managing or even removing the phobia which is cursing their daily existence. That’s not exciting except for the individual concerned and, of course, the people closest to them.

We may look at the costs of professional consultations and believe they are far beyond our ability to pay for enough to be of real value to us. But, there are some things which we can do by ourselves to start to deal with a phobia.

Some people will need professional help over a period of time to get the best results, but there may be arrangements available through local organizations which can make the costs more manageable.

So, if the problem you face seems beyond your personal resources, you should consider whether you might benefit from just one or two sessions to get professional advice which can help you be more confident about the choices you make for dealing with your phobias.

Dealing with Your Fears

Fixing a phobia or a related [anxiety](#) condition is always a multi-step process. The first step is to **recognize there is a problem**. Some people get used to the periods of fear or panic or compulsive behavior and they adapt to make the best of it without realizing that they are consciously limiting their expectations and potential for [success](#) and happiness.

1) The second step is to understand the importance of changing the situation for the better.

2) This is when you really start to make progress!

You have to accept that **you** are capable of improving your management of the problem or even eliminating its effects on your [life](#) and those people closest to you.

For this to happen, you need to check your understanding of the situation against independently verified data. Many of us have grown up with some facts imparted by parents and other authority figures or as a result of limited personal experience which are not true. And too many of us are very willing to accept what we get from media, including the Internet, without giving it any sort of reasonable examination.

Everyone has had negative experiences in their lives and many of us dwell on our past [disappointments](#) so much that we become convinced that we are less capable than other people. This limits our ability to deal with phobias and many other problems which may affect us.

When we realize that even the most successful and celebrated people in any line of endeavor fail sometimes, but they are highly regarded because of their successes and their continuing efforts to improve, we can use the message that their examples give us to inspire us to try one more time and then, if necessary, however many more times it may take.

I remember a [coach](#) at our school telling everyone that success is often just beyond the point where we most feel like giving up!

More Self Help Options

There are several things which may help you but the effectiveness of particular tactics and resources will obviously vary widely in line with your personal circumstances, [life](#) experience and current beliefs.

Minimizing the Effects of Phobias

You can try some of these self-help [methods](#) to alleviate some of the effects and the strength of the attachment which particular phobias have on you.

You must accept that you are responsible for your decision to do so and all consequences to yourself or others which may be attributed to that decision.

Research

This should be your first step.

Learning about your enemy is the first rule of any successful warrior and combating a phobia is a battle you need to prepare for and keep on with until you win.

Although there is much more information available to all of us through the Internet and various other sources, a lot of it is wrong or easy to misinterpret.

Most people probably sincerely believe what they tell you, but they may be talking from a [belief](#) rather than actual verified knowledge.

And of course, some will regularly provide you with information that is twisted in some fashion so that they can benefit from it rather than by a desire to help you.

Self-confidence

It is important that you don't limit your potential to improve your situation because your self-image is affected by past events.

You can accept that a disappointing result indicates you are incapable of doing something, but you might prefer to use it as a learning experience so that your next attempt is better. Remember that the difference between winning and almost making it can be just a matter of inches.

Proper preparation can make a significant difference.

Take time to prepare and practice. One [method](#) used by many top athletes is to break their actions into very small steps, refine each one to what their [coach](#) believes is the ideal pattern, and then start practicing each step until they get the revised action as close to the ideal and as smooth as they can.

But, the mental and paper [exercise](#) which they went through has put this information firmly in their mind and gives them reassurance that they can do it because they know each of the individual steps is within their ability.

Then, they create a mental [movie](#) of them actually performing the action perfectly. They run this movie through their [mind](#) many times. That helps to prepare their [body](#) for the exacting work which they must do and reinforce their ability to achieve the result in their subconscious.

Some suggestions may be useful to some people but may not be within your current capabilities.

But, if you do some research and prepare yourself mentally and physically, you will probably find that you are really capable of much more than you currently give yourself credit for.

Keep a Diary

A diary can help to keep you focused on your progress in improving your condition.

It is also sometimes a valuable diagnostic tool for your doctor if you record instances where you have some experience, good or bad, which relates to your condition. A simple example would be if you wrote that you felt short of [breath](#) on different occasions when you were in a particular part of your city.

This might indicate that the shortness of breath could be related to something in that area rather than your anxiety related condition or phobia all the time.

A diary can help you to focus more on positive things in your [life](#) instead of the problems which happen.

As you start to deal with your condition in an organized way, be sure to

record any positive happening, however small.

Then, you will be able to read them when you feel depressed about your progress or a new disappointment which happens to you.

Over time, you will feed these positive [thoughts](#) into your subconscious where they will erase many of the older negative ones which have been affecting your attitude in past years.

When You Need Help

The effects of phobias and related conditions can be very serious on your [health](#) and general well-being, your [relationships](#) with family and other people and your ability to do your work properly.

It is important that people who have any of these conditions seriously consider getting professional advice.

I know some people that had been indoctrinated with the idea that they should be strong enough to deal with simple problems themselves. This is sometimes expressed as being self-reliant and is a good thing to aspire to. But, we may not realize that what seems a minor problem may have a potential to seriously disrupt some part of our lives.

We may not be able to:

- Correctly identify the real problem
- Know the implications if we continue to put up with its effects on our lives and our family
- Recognize whether it is too difficult for us to deal with by ourselves
- Know the best way to deal with it
- Know whether it is something which we can deal with ourselves
- Know how willing some family, friends or even employers are to help if they are asked.



Many people, for instance, avoid going to the dentist and put up with sore gums and occasional [pain](#) from their [teeth](#). But, the consequences of poor oral hygiene can be much greater than they realize. Bad teeth can encourage the spread of [infection](#) through the [body](#), an inability to enjoy the full flavor of the foods they eat, an increasing inability to chew hard [food](#) or consume cold items like ice cream and reduced general strength.

I forgot to mention the bad breath which reduces our

appeal to other people we socialize with. And, eventually, the increased cost of dealing with the serious long-term effects.

In a similar way, a phobia which seems very minor can have equally devastating effects on ourselves if we do not decide whether we want to continue with the limitations it puts on our lives or deal with it so that we improve our current situation and ensure that our future will be even better!

A professional consultation is strongly recommended if:

- You and perhaps those around you are seriously affected by your problem.
- You have got to the stage where your condition is limiting your choice of social events you will attend or your ability to take advantage of [business](#) related opportunities. Sometimes, you impose these limitations on yourself. Sometimes they are imposed by others who stop offering them to you because of the effects of your condition.
- The effects continue more than a month and you cannot realistically expect any change for the better.
- You suffer physical symptoms such as headaches, other [pain](#), stomach upsets and similar conditions which have no obvious cause apart from the stress you feel because of your anxiety or phobia.

Professional Advice

Professional advice will cost some [money](#), but an experienced professional can save you money by using their experience and training to find the most likely cause of your problem and knowing the best ways, in line with current research that you can use to deal with its effects.

Always start with your regular [doctor](#). They will have intimate long-term knowledge of your circumstances and medical history which can help to narrow down the major factors influencing your conditions.

Sometimes, they may identify that your problem is related to some [treatment](#) which you had for another condition.

Some [medications](#) can cause or increase the effects of some anxiety related conditions. Even some [foods](#) may be an important factor.

Your doctor may recommend further professional help from a counselor or therapist who has experience with the type of condition you are affected by.

The doctor will be able to give you recommendations backed by the feedback they have had from other patients.

Those sessions can be an enormous help. Usually the first session allows the therapist to learn about your particular problem, facts about you and your [life](#) which may be relevant to it and the particular effects which you experience.

An experienced therapist may only need a few sessions to have a positive effect on your situation.

Sometimes, they may need more or you may find that after a period of time you need one or two sessions to reinforce the benefits of the first sessions.

That’s like having a booster injection to boost your protection against influenza after a year of protection.

Mutual help Groups

Mutual help groups can help as long as they have some leaders who have professional experience which is relevant.

There are many groups offering support directly at local meetings and/or through Internet forums.

Because of the ease with which forums and other interactive sites can be set up, gather information and then disappear, you should do some checking about any group which may offer help for the type of condition you have.

Don't join any group unless you have been able to verify that it has been operating successful for a period at the same site, that it is recognized by professionals who support people who have that sort of condition and it does not have any bad reports from authorities or credible former members.

Be careful about sharing personal data with other members who you don't have any other contact with, such as your actual birth date, full name, street address and other information which might be misused.

If someone is persistent about getting more information from you, end the discussion with them. Use any excuse that appears suitable.

When you join such a group, local or online, be careful who you share any personal information with apart from any reasonable questions which will help the office holders to verify that you are a fit person to join the group.

Don't let my warnings put you off looking for help with an appropriate group or increase any concerns you have about using the Internet or joining groups. These precautions are realistic and necessary. They protect you and also the people that you deal with. They are reasonable and no more than that.

The members are probably more likely to understand the symptoms and concerns which are affecting you.

Usually they will share information about people, [products](#) and procedures which have been helpful to them or have not performed to a reasonable standard.

Therapies which May Help

Most researchers acknowledge that there is no confirmed cause for phobias which makes the search for [cures](#) much harder.

Recently, some conditions which had been accepted as being mostly caused by environmental factors have been linked in some research to certain genetic factors.

But, even now, that may not be the final verdict – research continues.

However, the accumulated experiences of thousands of patients and the massive amount of research has indicated that some simple tactics may have some therapeutic value for some people if they are used in consultation with your doctor or other qualified advisor.

Ask Your Health Professional

One piece of advice which I recommend that you follow is to never consider any drug or other preparation as suitable for [treatment](#) of any potentially serious condition unless you discuss it with your [doctor](#).

When someone tells me about a particular preparation which has apparently helped them with a condition that I also have, I smile and thank them.

Then, I tell them that I have some allergy which may affect how good the [product](#) is for me and I will check with my doctor when I am there next.

The allergy is to accepting medical advice from usually well-meaning people who don't have the [training](#) and experience to know all about the positive and negative aspects of using something.

We are all different and something may work for them but cause [injury](#) of some kind to you.

Support From Those Around You.

Any sort of successful outcome will depend in part on the support and active involvement of the people close to you.

But, your own active and determined contribution is going to be the most significant factor in your own [success](#).

Cognitive Behavior Therapy

Cognitive Behavior Therapy is a group of treatments which may be used in various combinations to reduce or remove problems by focusing on beneficial changes to the [way](#) the people think, act or behave.

Ike all therapies which are used for helping with problems like phobias, the results depend to a large extent on the willing involvement of the person whose problem is being treated.

Some therapists say that they don't cure people, they help their clients to find and use the tools themselves.

When someone with a phobia or related condition starts to look on their thoughts as possibilities to be tested rather than absolutes to be followed, the therapist believes that they are making real progress.

Cognitive Behavior Therapy recognizes that you do not think or act in a vacuum and that the interaction between you, the people close to you and your environment all need to be studied before the best path to recovery can be discovered.

Relaxation

This is something which is hard for people with this sort of condition to do.

The benefits are worthwhile and there is no downside.

Some [methods](#) which they may find useful to be able to relax more include:



Hypnosis

This should only be done by trained and experienced professionals. There are risks which can be serious. But, a [therapist](#) whom you have confidence in, can sometimes help you achieve lasting relief. I don't say, "a [cure](#)" because some people have symptoms that recur after years without any sign of the problem.

Recorded Music

If you found [music](#) relaxing before you started to feel the effects of your

condition, don't stop playing it. It can help even if it may seem at first not to be as enjoyable as it used to be.

Recordings which include positive messages

Some people claim to get great results with these while others say that they are just high-priced gimmicks. I believe that a lot depends on the quality of the recording, the expertise of the people involved in making the recording and, sometimes, the level of confidence which the person with the phobia has in the whole process.

I would not expect great results from a cheap recording made on cheap equipment.

The equipment required to produce the correct type of recording is expensive and needs a person with the right technical knowledge to get good results.

Yoga

This is one of several forms of [exercise](#) which may help some people with relaxation and also, perhaps, increase their general [energy](#) level.

You should only start doing [yoga](#) under the direct supervision of a qualified instructor whose references you have carefully checked.

I read that Yoga, as well as having many enthusiastic claims made for the benefits which people get from it, is also one of the most common forms of exercise which result in medical and other insurance claims, especially from inexperienced people who are just starting to use it.

But, that said, I cannot discount the benefits which some people have got from it. Be aware that it will take some time for anyone to start to get observable benefits from all forms of [exercise](#).

Most important, take your time.

Reframing

This is a simple [technique](#) which is free and can have good results if approached in the right way.

Some of the difficulty which many people have in dealing with their condition is that they have become over time, through various reasons, focused

inward.

The fear which is the basis of their phobia is often more about what might happen to them in the situation they worry about or how others might regard them because of the sufferer’s reaction to the event, rather than the actual object, person or situation which is the basis of the phobia.

Reframing involves looking at the situation from a different but supportive viewpoint.

Imagine that you have a friend that has the problem and you are trying to help them, not yourself.

When you can properly focus from an exterior viewpoint like this, you will be able to use your intimate knowledge of the factors involved, but be less constrained by your personal feeling about the effects which the problem has been having on you.

This is usually surprisingly easy to do, though you may need to try it a few times before you achieve the level of detachment which you need to have.

I have found this may be helpful with other problems that I get from time to time.

Removing or reducing the [weight](#) of your personal interest in the situation is helpful when you are trying to help yourself.

It can also help in negotiations with other people; family or [business](#) associates. It’s a step toward looking at things from their point of view.

Reducing Sensitivity

Many people have problems with spiders, flying in aircraft, and other individual phobias.

Exposure to the object or situation related to their phobia is a [technique](#) which has been used successfully to help some of these people learn to deal with their particular problem.

Because the amount of exposure needed to trigger an anxiety attack or other destructive symptoms, people that are taking these [courses](#) need careful evaluation, close support, information given directly by someone whom they have confidence in for this area and then increasing exposure to their problem while still being closely monitored.

I believe that some courses have had good results over a reasonable period. You should check, where possible, with previous attendees as part of your evaluation of any course that you consider attending.

This approach has already shown some promising results with many of the individuals who complete their course. The good results suggest that wider availability may, over time, reduce the amount of money which these hard-to-treat conditions drain from our communities' [health](#) services every year.

I understand the number of different demands on government funds. But, I hope that it will not be too long before these programs are generally available.

Some of the phobias which may be treated by variations of this [method](#) include fear of creatures, high places, enclosed or wide open areas, driving, public speaking, visiting the dentist and other common tasks.

Fear of Flying

This is a problem which many people have.

It not only affects their personal [health](#), it can sometimes reduce their [business](#) success and opportunities to visit friends or take holidays.

Like other de-sensitizing programs for other phobias, related to such things as reptiles and other creatures or situations like visiting the dentist or



speaking in public, these [courses](#) give the attendees some basic but detailed information designed to help them remove any misunderstanding of the risks which may be associated with their phobia and the precautions which are in place, or which they need to take to prevent any sort of problem.

Sometimes, some people are helped enormously by the supplying of reliable information, such as what the actual insurance records about risks of certain kinds of accidents or other disasters.

The courses usually arrange a short familiarization flight as the last part of the course, so that the attendees can [test](#) the improvement in their [confidence](#) and enjoyment of the flying experience.

Common Phobias

This is a list of some of the most common phobias and related conditions. The names are the ones which I found most often used for the particular conditions referred to.

There seems to be some different terms which are used by different researchers and practitioners when talking about the same conditions. I have pointed some of these out. The best [way](#) to avoid confusion is to always include a description of one or more of the major symptoms when starting a discussion with someone.

I have included some of the currently popular [methods](#) which may be used by some practitioners with some patients for particular conditions. These mentions are not intended as recommendations because treatment should always be decided after personal consultation with due regard to the patient’s particular symptoms and past history.

I have not detailed pharmaceutical treatments because there are being rapidly overtaken by new drugs and it’s extremely important that they are matched to the particular patient with consideration of other conditions which they may have because of the possibility of sometimes severe side-effects.

Acrophobia is a fear of heights. People with this condition try to avoid high places and suffer panic attacks even at the thought of going to them.

Treatments which are sometimes used for this condition include Flooding, virtual reality exposure and counter conditioning **modeling**.

Agoraphobia is the fear of being unable to get out of a crowded or confined area or, surprisingly perhaps, a very large open space. Sufferers often try very hard to avoid going to places where they have had or expect that they will have episodes. That can have very damaging effects on their social and business options.

Exposure therapy, relaxation training and drugs to treat [anxiety](#) or depression are all used in various combinations according to the patient’s perceived needs.

Arachnophobia is the fear of encountering spiders. This is a phobia which can sometimes be treated by exposure to information and then, gradually, to either real or simulated spiders. Using some medications may give quicker results but care is needed because of potentially significant side-effects.

Some research suggests that this is more frequent among [women](#) than men.

Astraphobia is usually considered as a phobia related to thunderstorms but there are other related terms, including **Brontophobia**, which some use instead. Treatment may be giving the sufferer relaxation [therapy](#), hypnosis and virtual exposure separately or in various combinations.

Aviophobia is a fear of flying.

Treatment may be through [hypnosis](#), medication or [courses](#) which involve familiarization with the facts about flying, including explanations by pilots, tours of aircraft and information about safety issues, followed by a short demonstration flight have had many [successes](#). Simulations of this type of course or just of flights, backed up by theory sessions, have also been done.

Brontophobia is a term commonly used for fear of thunder and lightning. Simulation, familiarization and relaxation therapies have all been used. The only true test of their effectiveness is when the person actually experiences the real thing in their own regular environment.

Carcinophobia is an extreme fear or anxiety about contracting cancer. Some people call it cancerphobia. It may be linked to absorption of alarmist [media](#) reports or encounters with people that have cancer, especially if there has been a close [relationship](#), or just focusing on the possibility. Treatment may involve familiarization with the facts about the risks, potential treatments and minimizing risks (such as giving up smoking). Programs aimed at relaxing the person and helping them to focus on more positive aspects of their lives can also be effective.

Claustrophobia is extreme fear of confined spaces. Medications are often used but cognitive behavior [therapy](#), flooding and hypnosis are also claimed to be effective with some people.

Cynophobia is a fear of [dogs](#). The condition may be linked to a close and



disturbing encounter with a poorly trained or controlled dog when the person was a small child. They may instinctively know that most dogs are okay to be around but have their reactions set that early encounter and probably also the unsympathetic reaction of their parents and siblings.

Adults tend to try to get their children to pet dogs, even ones they don't know or tell them to be careful because dogs are dangerous. That's likely to ensure the child is afraid of dogs.

Pushing a child to pat a dog when they are obviously afraid of it will probably cause them to become more fearful and also lower their self-esteem because they feel they are not worthy in their parent's [eyes](#).

No child should try to play with a dog or other [animal](#) if they are not familiar how to treat it. Apart from any risk to the child, they may harm the animal or unintentionally cause harm to the animal and then be bitten or scratched. That accident could mean that the animal, probably some child's [pet](#) has to be euthanized through no fault of its own.

Tell your child that they should only approach a dog if they know it and that you or an adult that they know well is there to supervise. If they show fear, don't say they are wrong but offer to walk with them past the dog or wait with them until the dog goes past.

Read stories or watch movies together about animals interacting with children. Find a cooperative friend with a dog that likes children and help your child to learn how to treat it. Take small steps so that the child is comfortable at all times.

A friend has let a couple of her friends bring their children to her dog. They learn not to jump around close to the [dog](#), not to approach the dog when it is eating and how to brush it. When they are happy to offer it a biscuit (after asking an adult), they're ready to face the world of dogs with reasonable

comfort and safety. A possible downside is that both these children now want their own dog!

The [dog](#) should be one that is especially patient with small children, like hers. I have seen the suggestion in some [books](#) and articles about helping your child over their fear of dogs by taking them to the pet [shop](#) or animal shelter to see the dogs. It probably won't help the child much and is unfair to the dogs because the dogs are in a stressful environment with no assured [home](#) of their own.

You will get better results with a friend's dog that has settled in to its home. Then, if the child wants a dog later on, you could consider getting the child a [pet](#) from the shelter if you are prepared to give it a home for [life](#).

Ailurophobia is a fear of cats. This may be linked to an early upsetting encounter with a cat, a fear of being bitten or scratched or a belief that [cats](#) are in some way evil.

This fear can be very stressful for the person. Professional counseling may be needed to find the basis of the fear and the most likely path to relief. [Help](#) and support from a patient relative or close friend with a good-natured cat may help but any exposure to an actual cat should be taken in small steps.

Mysophobia is fear of being in contact with dirt and germs. This may be associated with obsessive compulsive disorder behavior such as compulsively and repeatedly washing hands.

A variety of treatments may be recommended in particular cases. Cognitive behavior therapy is claimed to often get good results but faster results, which may be temporary and have side-effects, are claimed for certain medications.

Other treatments such as [hypnotherapy](#) and Neuro Linguistic Programming are also claimed to have some [successes](#).

Necrophobia is an extreme fear of death and dead people or creatures. (**Thanatophobia** is sometimes used for the same condition or for fear of the person's own death.)

Exposure therapy and counter conditioning are claimed to have good results

in some cases. Flooding has been used but professional advice and supervision would be particularly needed with that. Some drugs are used under careful supervision.

Ophidiophobia is the fear of snakes. A person’s susceptibility to this condition may relate to cultural conditioning, personal encounters or witnessing attacks by snakes in real life or through the media.

Exposure therapy and counter conditioning accompanied by relaxation [training](#) and reframing can be helpful. The degree of exposure needed to trigger symptoms may vary from just the thought of seeing a snake to only occurring when they see an actual snake.

Social phobias can be of many types. They may be based on unhappy experiences or someone feeling under [pressure](#) before some sort of interaction. The main focus of these types of phobias is the high expectation that they will be less popular or even insulted as a result of the looming encounter. The people with these conditions not only suffer poor social interaction as well as [stress](#)-related symptoms but they tend to withdraw from most social events to avoid possible future problems.

Professional counselling may be a good early move and support from their [family](#) and limited group of friends will help enormously to inspire them to keep trying.

Trypanophobia is a fear of medical procedures which involve needles. The condition may only have limited effect when the person avoids any likelihood of such encounters but can be a problem if they need [treatment](#) urgently at any time.

That’s why anyone that has suffered anxiety symptoms because of this type of fear should talk to their doctor who may be either able to re-assure them or arrange for some sort of training to reduce the risk of a problem in an emergency situation.



Xenophobia is the fear of people or items from other cultures. This may be

related to actual experiences or to their views being affected by the input from care givers and other authority figures in their early lives.

Medication and Cognitive [behavior](#) therapy are usually recommended.

Exposure to people and items may also [help](#) them to adapt their views based on actual experience, if they are willing to do so.

Resources

A lot of help for people with phobias and those who are close to them is available on line.

Please be aware that some sources of advice are better than others.

Always [check](#) about any organization or person you contact before you give them [money](#) or sensitive personal details.

The organizations in this list are not endorsed by the publisher, author or resellers of this [ebook](#).

The information about them is from their web site or literature.

Ownership, focus and content of any web site may be changed at any time without notice, so always get current information through resources you know and trust such as your doctor or related government organizations.

United States of America

Mental Health America

<http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/go/phobias>

Cost of Membership is \$5 a month but there is free information on the website, including a list of groups which provide support for people with various conditions and those close to them:

http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/go/find_support_group

The Anxiety Disorders Association of America

<http://www.adaa.org/>

A national nonprofit organization dedicated to the prevention, treatment, and [cure](#) of anxiety disorders and to improving the lives of all people who suffer from them.

Social Anxiety Association

<http://www.socialphobia.org>

Offers help to all those people who are affected by Social Anxiety, which may be the third largest mental [health](#) care problem in the world today

Healthy Minds

<http://www.healthyminds.org/>

A site belonging to the American Psychiatric Association which offers general information and encouragement for people who have or are supporting someone who has some kind of mental problem.

United Kingdom

National Support Groups List

This list is maintained by the N.H.S. and covers a wide range of listings, including support for people with phobias and related conditions

<http://www.cnwl.nhs.uk/nationalsupportgroups.html>

The Royal College of Psychiatrists Anxiety and Phobia information

<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinfoforall/problems/anxietyphobias.aspx>

This is just part of the information supplied through this site for people who are affected and those close to them as well as teachers and interested lay people by the Royal College of Psychiatrists

Australia

Anxiety Information and Contacts – Victoria

http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/ct_anxiety?open

Provided by the government of the State of Victoria through the Better [Health](#) Channel web site. Focused on services for people in Victoria but has information which would be of wider interest. Also has information about many other medical topics.

Back From the Brink

<http://www.iambackfromthebrink.com/>

Site of Graeme Cowan, who has had five serious bouts of [depression](#), the latest one lasted five years) and uses the site to [help](#) other people who have the same sorts of problems. He does public speaking and offers some books

from the site.

If you are anywhere in Australia, there are probably some sources of help listed here <http://www.iambackfromthebrink.com/australia.html> that you can connect with easily.

Your Path to Freedom

I hope that you will be reassured and inspired by reading this [book](#).

Although there are no guaranteed cures for these conditions, there are many confirmed reports of people that have been helped to where they have got such an improvement in their well-being and enjoyment of [life](#) and what it offers that they feel almost as if they have been reborn.

It can seem that the problems who people with these conditions have, the effort needed to change the situation might be to much.

But, I know that anyone that does it in small steps will find every one a little easier.

Your first small success will give you more [confidence](#) and resolve to move forward.

I wish you all the [love](#) and success which you want for yourself.

You deserve it!

Marion Udall

[Another eBookWholesaler Publication](#)