

# Everybody's Mental Health Matters



## Phobias

### What is a phobia?

A phobia is an intense feeling of anxiety, usually brought about by a particular situation or circumstance. People who experience phobias may not necessarily suffer from severe anxiety in most situations; however, when faced with their particular phobia they can feel extremely anxious.

#### Two Common Phobias Include:

**Agoraphobia:** Will often be experienced by people who have a fear of being in places that they can't get away from easily (for example, busy shops, buses, trains etc..) and a worry that they will embarrass themselves in some way.

**Social Phobia:** Can include fear about what other people think about you and can lead to avoiding social situations, particularly when you might find yourself the centre of attention.

### Common Symptoms:

People feeling anxious due to their phobia may experience some of the following symptoms:

#### Physical Symptoms:

- Palpitations
- Sweating
- Muscle Tension / Pains
- Dizziness
- Faintness
- Indigestion
- Diarrhoea

#### Mental Symptoms:

- Feeling worried
- Feeling tired
- Poor concentration
- Irritability
- Poor sleep

### Panic Attacks

Occasionally an intense phobia can lead to a panic attack. This can be experienced as a feeling of overwhelming anxiety, a fear of losing control, even a feeling that a person is dying or losing their mind. This will normally only last for a few minutes and can leave the person feeling very weak and tired. Panic attacks will normally stop without interference and are not normally harmful.

### Common Treatments

- Exposure Therapy
- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
- Social Skills Training
- Self Confidence Classes

### Further Information

[www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinformation.aspx](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinformation.aspx)

[www.mentalhealth.org.uk](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk)