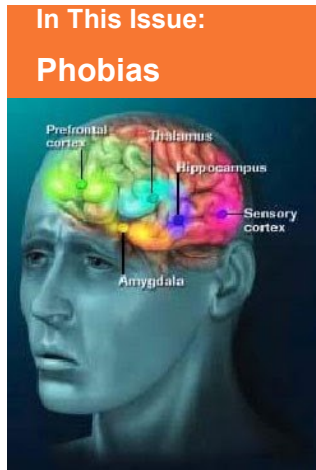




MONTHLY MENTAL HEALTH NEWSLETTER

Presented by the Gwinnett County Sheriff's Office Mental Health Task Force



What are Phobias?

There is a lot more to know about Phobias than most people realize. A Phobia is actually an **overwhelming and debilitating** fear of an object, place, situation, feeling or animal.

A Phobia is much more than just a fear. Phobias develop when a person has an unrealistic, irrational sense of danger or even terror about a situation or object.

Phobias may be so severe that they can cause a dangerous “fight or flight” response in the neuro circuitry of the brain similar to what is found in some PTSD patients (*see affected brain areas in diagram at left*)

Symptoms of Phobia

Phobias fall under the larger heading of Anxiety and symptoms may include:

- unsteadiness, dizziness and lightheadedness
- nausea
- sweating
- increased heart rate or palpitations
- shortness of breath
- trembling or shaking
- an upset stomach
- physical and emotional “fight or flight” responses could be triggered in some cases.

Common phobias include:

- Arachnophobia: fear of spiders
- Aerophobia: fear of flying
- Mysophobia: fear of germs
- Acrophobia: fear of heights,

What causes phobias?

Phobias do not seem to have a single cause, but there are a number of associated factors such as:

Being associated with a particular incident or trauma

A phobia may be a learned response that a person develops early in life from a parent or sibling

Genetics may play a role – there's evidence to suggest that some people are born with a lower startle threshold than others.

Treatment may include “exposure therapy” which is a form of cognitive behavioral therapy designed to build up the patient’s ability to cope with the source of the phobia over measured exposures to the phobia source.

Phobias can manifest with any object, animal or even physical attributes and activities or situations, even some you may not be familiar with such as...

- Pediophobia: Fear of Dolls
- Coulrophobia: Fear of Clowns
- Emetophobia: Fear of Vomiting
- Ornithophobia: Fear of Birds
- Porphyrophobia: Fear of the Color Purple
- Kathisophobia: Fear of Sitting
- Hedonophobia: Fear of Pleasure

The sources of phobia are endless.

Life with a real phobia can be disruptive.

If a phobia becomes severe, a person may organize their life around avoiding those triggers causing them anxiety. As well as restricting their day-to-day life, these issues can rob the sufferer of a full, productive life.

Some may not experience any symptoms until they come into contact with the source of the phobia, but for many, even thinking about the source of a phobia can cause anxious or panicky responses. This is known as “anticipatory anxiety”.

In extreme cases such as “Agoraphobia” the sufferer may become a complete recluse and a self imposed prisoner of their dwelling, unable to physically leave that “safe” environment and thus are unable to be a part of the world outside

REFERENCES

The G.C.S.O. Mental Health Task Force encourages you to utilize the sources listed below and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) at www.samhsa.gov to learn more about this and other important mental health topics.

Diagnostic Statistical Manual –V, American Psychiatric Association, Washington, DC. June 2013

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK499923/>

<https://www.merckmanuals.com/professional/psychiatric-disorders/anxiety-and-stressor-related-disorders/specific-phobic-disorders>

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