

Phobias

WORKSHEET A

Do you know anyone who suffers from equinophobia, pluviophobia, or leukophobia? Or, to put it another way, do you know anyone who is very afraid of horses, rain, or the color white? You probably don't, and yet these are recognized medical conditions, albeit very rare ones.

According to many surveys, more than ten percent of people in the United States have some kind of phobia (the word comes from the Greek *phobós*, meaning fear). There are, of course, dozens of different kinds, ranging from the obscure to the well known. The names of most of them have been created by adding “phobia” to a Greek or Latin root – a process that has turned into something of a word game, with people inventing names for conditions that perhaps exist only in theory (for example, androidophobia, the fear of robots).

True phobias consist of an intense but generally irrational fear that produces a very strong desire to avoid the object of that fear. Without specialist help they are very difficult to control and tend to disrupt the daily life of the sufferer. Quite often, however, the term *phobia* is also used to refer to a lesser degree of fear, or even just a strong feeling of dislike.

There is some disagreement as to the most common phobias, but the “top ten” lists usually include arachnophobia (the fear of spiders), acrophobia (heights), claustrophobia (confined spaces), and aviophobia (flying in aircraft).

Phobias often originate from traumatic experiences earlier in life – for example, an intense fear of dogs (cynophobia) often comes from having been bitten by one; and of water (aquaphobia) from having been close to drowning at some point. In some cases, however, experts suggest phobias are to some extent evolutionary, arising not from personal experience but from inherited ancestral memory lying deep in our brains. Arachnophobia and ophidiophobia (fear of snakes) are often suggested as examples: for our distant ancestors, who lived closer to nature than we do, fear of poisonous spiders and snakes would have served the useful evolutionary purpose of helping them avoid potentially lethal bites.

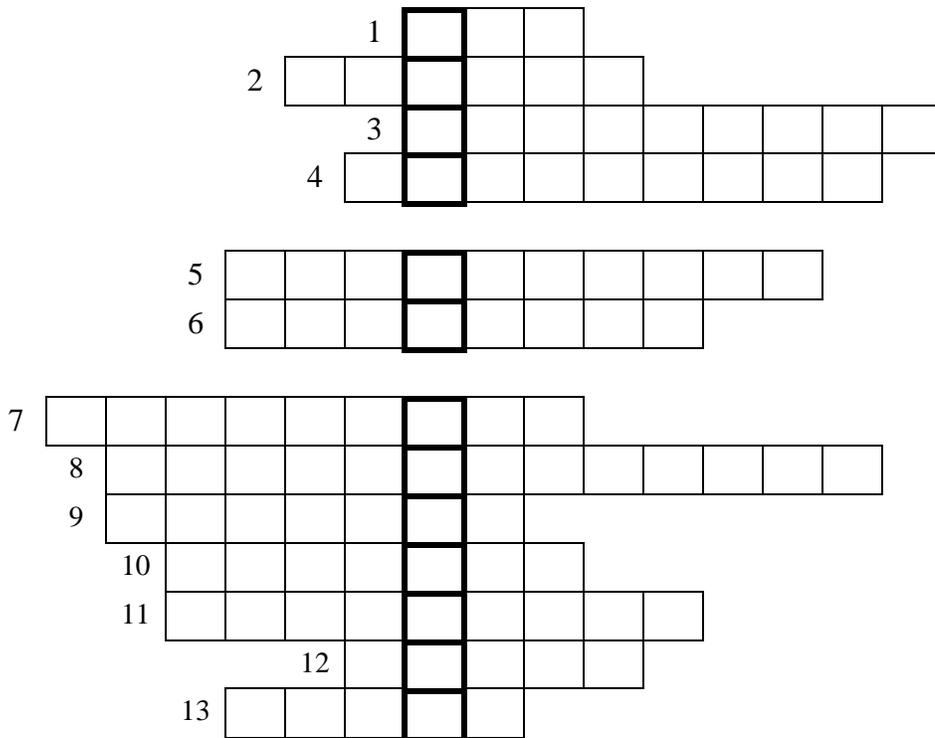
A common technique for treating some phobias is that of “progressive exposure” in which sufferers are encouraged by a therapist to gradually get closer to the object of their fear. The idea is that at each step the patient realizes nothing bad is happening to them, which should lead to their fear gradually decreasing. With someone who is terrified of spiders, for example, the therapist might start by showing them a picture of a spider, then introducing a real spider in a glass box and slowly moving the box closer to them, then finally having them hold the spider in the palm of their hand. Therapy of this kind is said to be very effective, although in this case perhaps not very enjoyable.

Phobias

WORKSHEET B

Exercise 1

Complete the crossword below. If all the words are correct, the meaning of entomophobia (which is quite common, at least in its milder forms) will read from top to bottom.



1. Very _____ people are afraid of rain or the color white.
2. The text suggests that some phobias might exist only in _____.
3. The fear of spiders might be something we have inherited from our _____.
4. _____ experiences can lead to phobias.
5. Someone with _____ might find it impossible to fly on a plane.
6. Claustrophobia means a fear of _____ spaces.
7. The text suggests that _____ names for possible phobias has become something of a word game.
8. The text gives an example of how _____ might be treated.
9. People with true phobias experience _____ fear.
10. _____ suggest that many people in the USA have some kind of phobia.
11. The text suggests that “progressive exposure” might be very _____.
12. Progressive exposure consists of gradual _____ closer to the object of fear.
13. According to experts, not all phobias _____ from personal experience.

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WORKSHEET C

Exercise 2

The text from Worksheet A has been copied below, but now contains one mistake on each line. Can you find the mistakes and correct them?

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WORKSHEET D

Do you know anyone who suffers **from** equinophobia, pluviophobia, or leukophobia? Or, to put it another way, do you know anyone who is very **afraid** of horses, rain, or the color white? You probably don't, and yet these are recognized **medical** conditions, albeit very **rare** ones.

According to many surveys, more than ten **percent** of people in the United States have some kind of phobia (the word comes from the **Greek** *phobós*, meaning fear). There are, of course, dozens of different kinds, ranging **from** the obscure to the well known. The names of most of them have **been** created by adding “phobia” to a Greek or Latin root – a process that has turned into something **of** a word game, with people inventing names for conditions that perhaps exist only **in** theory (for example, androidophobia, the fear of **robots**).

True phobias consist of an intense but generally **irrational** fear that produces a very strong desire to avoid the object of that fear. Without **specialist** help they are very difficult to control and tend to **disrupt** the daily life of the sufferer. Quite often, however, the term *phobia* is also used to refer to a lesser degree of **fear**, or even just a strong feeling of **dislike**.

There is some **disagreement** as to the most common phobias, but the “top ten” lists usually include arachnophobia (the fear of spiders), acrophobia (**heights**), claustrophobia (confined spaces), and aviophobia (flying in **aircraft**).

Phobias often originate **from** traumatic experiences earlier in life – for example, an intense fear of dogs (cynophobia) often comes from having been **bitten** by one, and of water (aquaphobia) from having been close to drowning at some point. **In** some cases, however, experts suggest phobias are to some extent **evolutionary**, arising not from personal experience but from inherited ancestral memory lying **deep** in our brains. Arachnophobia and **ophidiophobia** (the fear of snakes) are often suggested as examples: for our distant ancestors, who lived closer **to nature** than we do, fear of poisonous spiders and snakes would have served the useful evolutionary **purpose** of helping them avoid potentially **lethal** bites.

A common **technique** for treating some phobias is that of “progressive exposure” in which sufferers are encouraged by a **therapist** to gradually get closer to the object of their fear. The idea is that at each **step** the patient realizes nothing bad is happening to them, which should lead to their fear gradually **decreasing**. With someone who is terrified of spiders, for example, the therapist might start by showing them a picture **of** a spider, then introducing **a** real spider in a glass box and slowly moving the box closer to them, then finally having them hold the spider in the **palm** of their hand. Therapy of this kind is said to be very effective, although in this case perhaps not very **enjoyable**.