



## FACT FILE

# PHOBIAS

## WHAT ARE PHOBIAS?

Phobias are an irrational, intense fear or anxiety about a specific object or situation. These can vary from a fear of heights to a fear of spiders or seeing blood.

## SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Someone who is phobic about a particular object or situation may exhibit physical distress and panic when confronted with the source of their fear.

Anxiety symptoms may include heart palpitations, sweating, nausea, or feeling faint. They may also actively try to avoid coming into contact with their feared object or situation.

## STRATEGIES

### Graded Exposure

Graded Exposure can be an effective approach to overcoming phobias. This is where an individual is gradually exposed to their feared stimulus. Using the fear ladder you can identify incremental steps to be taken to increase prolonged exposure to the feared stimulus.

### Relaxation Techniques

These can be helpful when in the presence of the feared stimulus. This can include deep breathing (breathe in for 4 seconds, hold for 2, and breathe out for 6 seconds). Another alternative is using progressive muscle relaxation, where muscle groups are tensed and relaxed to give the physical sensation of relief.

### Visualisation Techniques

Visualisation techniques can involve mentally rehearsing or visualising coming into contact with the feared stimulus, and successfully managing the situation.