

Fear

Fear is a natural human emotion, and it is something that everyone experiences in his or her lifetime. What matters most is how you fight your fears, and whether you let them affect your life.

You may not call your feeling 'fear'. You might call it stress, worry or panic, but often, when we use these words, we are talking about the same emotion.

When you feel fear, you can experience three types of symptoms:

1. Unhelpful thoughts, such as thinking everyone in the room is having critical thoughts about you, or that something bad will happen.
2. Physical symptoms, such as a rapid heartbeat, faster breathing, sweating and higher blood pressure (your body's 'fight or flight' response).
3. Changes in your behaviour, ranging from simple things such as avoiding a fun activity, to more serious issues like being afraid to leave your home.

The good news is there are many ways to help manage your fears and lots of places to find help.

The difference between healthy and unhealthy fears

Fear is programmed into your nervous system, and it works, instinctively, from when you are a baby. It gives you the survival instincts you need to keep yourself safe when you feel like you are in danger.

Some fears are healthy. If you see a poisonous snake in your back garden, and your fear prompts you to run back into the house and close the door, which is a healthy fear. The feeling of fear is natural and helps keep you safe.

However, other fears are unhealthy and unnecessary. Sometimes, your fear makes you more cautious than you really need to be. For example, the fear of meeting new people. It may be intimidating, but meeting new people does not pose any real threat to your safety. This fear is unhealthy because it stops you doing things you might otherwise enjoy.

The **My Fears** worksheet can be used as a discussion starting point about anxiety and fear. The goal of this worksheet is to begin introducing you to the concept that thoughts and feelings are linked, and to increase awareness of your emotions by asking you to identify how your body responds to anxiety.

You can list your fears, describe your thoughts about the anxiety, identify where in your body you sense the feeling, and finally to create a plan for dealing with fear in the future.

Resources:

My Fears Worksheet

Overcoming avoidance: Facing your fears

How to overcome fear and anxiety

The Psychology of Fear

<https://www.verywellmind.com/the-psychology-of-fear-2671696>

10 Ways to fight your fears

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/mental-wellbeing/fears-and-phobias/ten-ways-to-fight-your-fears>