

FEARS AND PHOBIAS: UNDERSTANDING THEM, DEFEATING THEM

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TEACHER'S RESOURCE BOOK

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FEARS AND PHOBIAS: UNDERSTANDING THEM, DEFEATING THEM

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Learning Objectives	2
Program Summary	3
Pre/Post Test	6

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

1. Name That Phobia	9
2. Fear Survey	11
3. Fear in the Media	13
4. Fear Assessment	14
5. Research Project	15
6. Dear Advice Whiz	17
7. Plan of Attack	18
8. Best and Worst	19
9. Story Time	21
10. Never Fear	22

FACT SHEETS

1. Anxiety Disorders	24
2. Did You Know?	25
3. Treatments	26
4. Controlling Your Fears	27
5. Getting Help	28
6. Resources	29
Other Mental Health Programs from Human Relations Media	30

Sweaty palms, a racing heart, tensed muscles: we all know how unpleasant it is to feel scared or anxious, and young people are no exception. In fact, young people are among those likely to be affected by anxiety; exams, pressure to get into college, extracurricular stress, dating and peer relationships can all take their toll on today's teens.

While it is normal to feel some anxiety or fear (over an important test, for example), teens can be overcome by these emotions. To someone who experiences heightened anxiety, a normal situation, like giving a speech in class or meeting new people, can be terrifying. It doesn't matter if a teen is truly in danger—if she thinks she is facing a threat, her body will react accordingly. Social situations are especially likely to trigger a fear response for teens. The turbulent middle and high school years are marked by the increased importance of social relationships—teens want to avoid embarrassment and humiliation more than ever, which can cause anxiety to run away with them.

When a young person's anxiety is persistent, intense, and prevents him or her from fully enjoying life, it has moved beyond the normal range of nervousness to become a full-fledged anxiety disorder. Anxiety disorders, which include panic disorders, social phobia, specific phobias, and general anxiety disorder, are the most common psychiatric illnesses affecting both American youth and adults. It is crucial that young people learn how to cope with their anxiety and fear; not only will they have to endure a less-than-enjoyable life, but sufferers are also more likely to have problems in school, have less developed social skills and be more vulnerable to substance abuse.

The good news is that anxiety and fear are highly treatable. Whether young people seek help from parents, teachers, counselors or mental health professionals, their worries can be put under control by psychotherapy or medication. Often, however, the most important thing a teen can do to overcome a fear is simply to face it in a gradual, controlled way. By learning that the feared object or situation is not so bad after all, young people free themselves from their debilitating worries. Nobody has to stay trapped by overwhelming anxiety—with a little help, teens can overcome their fears and move on to a more enjoyable life.

After watching the video *Fears and Phobias: Understanding Them, Defeating Them* and completing the activities in the teacher's guide, viewers will have a better understanding of the causes and treatments for fears and phobias. Young people are given easy-to-follow instructions about specific methods that are proven to reduce anxiety. This program empowers and educates students to take appropriate and proven steps in overcoming their fears and removing the barriers that prohibit them from living happier more productive lives.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After watching the video *Fears and Phobias: Understanding Them, Defeating Them* and participating in the class activities included in this Teacher's Resource Book, your students will be able to:

- understand the evolution of the fight or flight response
- explain the physical changes that occur when the brain perceives a threat
- name the most common situations that trigger fear in young people
- define the difference between a fear and a phobia
- list the factors that make a person more likely to suffer from a phobia
- understand the symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder
- list short-term strategies for controlling anxiety before it becomes excessive
- explain the importance of facing a fear gradually
- overcome their own fears with simple, long-term strategies

The program begins by spotlighting three students: Tom, Anne, and Sarah are all overcome with anxiety. With racing hearts and sweaty palms, each one would like nothing better than to escape their frightening situations. Tom is nervous about giving a speech, Anne is afraid to take a test, and Sarah is terrified of meeting new people. All three may be safe, but all still suffer from a debilitating fear.

The video turns to Dr. David Tolin of the Institute of Living's Anxiety Disorder Clinic to help explain why people feel fear. Fear began in humankind's ancient ancestors as a defense mechanism called the "fight or flight response." This response is a biological and psychological process designed to save lives by readying the body to either fight or run away from a threat. Dr. Anne Marie Albano of Columbia University adds that "a third response that sort of goes along with that is the freeze."

The fight or flight response is then described as a phenomenon that "supercharges your body by putting it through a number of abrupt changes." When a threat is sensed, heart rate increases to fuel the muscles with blood, breathing speeds up to deliver more oxygen to the body, muscles contract, pupils dilate, and the body starts to perspire. Dr. Tolin explains, "all of these different biological things happen in order for us to make a rapid response to threat."

The video notes that humans are still hardwired with the fight or flight response even after years of evolution because they still need to be able to react to danger. Dr. Tolin gives the example of stepping into oncoming traffic; "the normal decision-making process that our brain goes through is too slow...what we need in a situation like that is a very rapid brain response that mobilizes the body's defense and escape mechanisms." Dr. Albano adds that the fight or flight response, "at its basic level, it's good. It's a motivator and it's a protector."

However, this response can also make everyday situations scary. Even if a person is not in any real danger, he might perceive that he is; this perception alone will trigger physical responses. The video then explains the series of chemical changes that go on in the brain using the example of a teen at home alone and who hears a strange noise. If the teen thinks that the noise means that someone has broken into the house, "the brain sends an alarm, triggering the hypothalamus. The hypothalamus then sends a signal down to the pituitary, which in turn sends a signal down to the adrenal glands. The adrenal glands secrete adrenaline, or epinephrine...epinephrine is the chemical that's used to trigger the fight or flight response."

Next, the video tells students that social situations often trigger the fight or flight response because the possibility of rejection, humiliation and being teased can be scary. Even if these fears are more imaginary than genuine, the body still responds by "turning on the danger mechanism."

The program then returns to Tom and his fear of giving a speech in class. While many students may feel a little nervous about public speaking, Tom's anxiety is intense. "Most likely Tom's been thinking, 'I'm going to look like such a goofball, everybody's going to see how embarrassed and how nervous I am, and that's just going to humiliate me all the more,'" says Dr. Tolin. Since Tom's brain is labeling his speech as such a threat, his body goes into the fight or flight response.

Anne is suffering from a similar physical response because of her anxiety about taking a test. The video reveals that her fear affected her even as he was studying. Dr. Albano explains that students who have test anxiety "can't look at the books...can't study. And what happens to kids in the exams is they freeze and they forget because they're so anxious." Instead of worrying about social humiliation, Anne is concerned about failure; however, the threat of performing poorly on a test causes her to go into the fight or flight response, just as Tom did because of his speech.

Next, viewers return to Sarah and her fear of meeting new people at a club her mother is forcing her to join. Dr. Albano says, "she's probably made up her mind that she's not going to get anything out of it, not going to enjoy it and it's going to be a horrible experience for her." Sarah's response stems from the fear of being humiliated or laughed at by her peers, and she has dealt with it by avoiding other people.

The video then points out that these fears could turn into phobias if they are not treated. A phobia is "an exaggerated and warped version of fear," often of things that are not dangerous. When a fear becomes so intense that it causes a person to limit her life and go out of her way to avoid the situation that triggers the fear, it is considered a phobia. "it's sort of like you're having your fire alarm go off when there is no fire," says Dr. Albano.

The program tells viewers that millions of people suffer from a variety of phobias, but scientists know little about what makes some people develop them and others not. Gender may have an effect: women are more likely to suffer from phobias, but no one knows if this is because they actually have more phobias than men or if they are just more likely to seek treatment. Other risk factors are a family history of phobias, past traumatic experiences, exposure to a very anxious environment, and an individual's temperament.

Next, viewers learn that the most common phobias among young people involve social situations. Dr. Tolin explains that this is because "they're at a new developmental stage where they're much more acutely aware of their own responsibilities... and the way that they interact with other people. It's also a time when people get picked on a lot more."

When does a fear qualify as a phobia? The video answers this question with three criteria. First, a phobia is characterized by excessive, irrational fear that is out of proportion to the actual threat. Secondly, someone who suffers from a phobia will deliberately avoid the

situation or thing that scares her. Thirdly, the fear causes a decreased quality of life.

Sometimes a person will suffer not from a specific phobia, but from a condition called generalized anxiety disorder. “These are kids that worry about everything,” says Dr. Albano. Dr. Tolin adds “they’re just a big bundle of worries, and they can’t enjoy anything anymore. And along with that come all of the sensations that come from having your fight or flight system turned on for too long.”

Luckily, Tom, Anne and Sarah do not have to suffer the consequences of their fears forever—they can learn strategies to control their anxiety. One technique is to control breathing when a threat first appears. Another is to focus on the task at hand instead of other people’s reactions. A more long-term step students can take to deal with anxiety is to assess the fear: as Dr. Tolin explains, “if somebody is afraid of something, often it’s helpful for them to stop and ask themselves, ‘what am I really afraid of?’ . . .and then, from there, ‘is that really something that’s likely to happen or am I making a mountain out of a molehill?’”

Another long-term strategy is to share the fear with a parent, teacher, or friend. The video points out that many people suffer from anxiety, although few want to admit it—by sharing a fear, students will probably learn that they are not alone. Another helpful technique to deal with fear is to take care of the body by getting enough sleep, exercising and eating a well-balanced diet. It’s especially important to avoid using alcohol or drugs to try to calm down; while these substances may work in the short term, they can develop into an even more troublesome dependence. Another empowering strategy is to learn about the fear. “Knowledge is power . . .because one of the things that anxiety and phobias do to you, is they trick you . . .they make you think that whatever the situation is, you have no control in it.”

The video then tells viewers that one of the best ways to overcome a fear is to face it gradually. For Tom, this means giving speeches to small groups before moving on to the entire class. For Anne, this means concentrating on what she knows and coming up with a test-taking strategy. For Sarah, this means meeting new people. If any of them feel that they cannot face their fears alone, they can always find professional help. Says Dr. Albano, “phobias and anxieties are highly treatable. You really can get help, learn some skills, in a very short period of time.”

The program finishes by encouraging students to take the initiative and deal with their fears. Why continue to suffer from a fear that gets in the way of fully enjoying life?

1. **True or False:** Teens are especially prone to social phobias.
2. **True or False:** The fight or flight response refers to the physical changes the body goes through when the brain perceives danger.
3. **True or False:** Using alcohol or drugs is a good way to calm down when you're feeling anxious.
4. **True or False:** When you feel scared or anxious, it's because the brain is secreting a hormone called serotonin.
5. **True or False:** Symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder include fatigue, irritability, and tension.
6. Which of the following is NOT a factor that increases your risk for developing a phobia?
 - a. Being female
 - b. Having experienced a traumatic event
 - c. Having a high-stress job
 - d. Having family members who suffer from phobias
 - e. Being around a lot of anxious people
7. The best way to overcome a fear is to
 - a. avoid what scares you at all costs
 - b. talk about your fear with others
 - c. get enough sleep
 - d. face the fear gradually
8. Social phobia is based on the fear that
 - a. others will judge your actions
 - b. you will humiliate yourself in front of peers
 - c. you will lose social status
 - d. all of the above

This test is continued on the next page.

- 9.** Which is the correct sequence of events for the brain's response to a threat?
- a.** The pituitary gland sends a signal to the adrenal glands, which send it to the hypothalamus.
 - b.** The hypothalamus sends a signal to the pituitary gland, which sends it to the adrenal glands.
 - c.** The adrenal glands send a signal to the hypothalamus, which sends it to the pituitary gland.
- 10.** For a fear to be considered a phobia, it must
- a.** be excessive and irrational
 - b.** cause the person to avoid the thing that triggers the fear
 - c.** last at least six months
 - d.** decrease quality of life
 - e.** all of the above
 - f.** a and d only
 - g.** a, b, and d only

The Answer Key for this test is provided on the next page.

Answer Key

1. **True** Teens are especially prone to social phobias.
2. **True** The fight or flight response refers to the physical changes the body goes through when the brain perceives danger.
3. **False** Using alcohol or drugs is a good way to calm down when you're feeling anxious.
4. **False** When you feel scared or anxious, it's because the brain is secreting a hormone called serotonin.
5. **True** Symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder include fatigue, irritability, and tension.
6. Which of the following is NOT a factor that increases your risk for developing a phobia?
 - c. **having a high-stress job**
7. The best way to overcome a fear is to
 - d. **face the fear gradually**
8. Social phobia is based on the fear that
 - d. **all of the above**
9. Which is the correct sequence of events for the brain's response to a threat?
 - b. **the hypothalamus sends a signal to the pituitary gland, which sends it to the adrenal glands.**
10. For a fear to be considered a phobia, it must
 - g. **a, b, and d only**

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Name: _____

Psychologists have described all kinds of different phobias. Can you match each person below with the phobia that he or she is suffering from?

1. Even though Mary is sixteen, she still sleeps with a night light because she is so afraid of darkness .	Achluophobia
2. Paul has to type everything because he is very afraid of handwriting.	Cryophobia
3. Samantha fainted the last time she saw a snake .	Deipnophobia
4. James had to drop his language class because he is terrified of French culture .	Francophobia
5. Olga wears sweaters in July because the cold scares her.	Graphophobia
6. Paco's heart races whenever he runs across a bee .	Heliophobia
7. Jeri starts breathing quickly and tensing up if she hears a loud noise .	Koniophobia
8. Chin always drives ten miles under the speed limit due to his fear of speed .	Ligyrophobia
9. Annie gets the shakes when she thinks of the color yellow .	Melissophobia
10. Ben only leaves the house at night because the sun makes him go weak in the knees.	Mycophobia
11. Vera loses control when she has to make dinner conversation .	Octophobia
12. Nathaniel gets the shakes if he crosses paths with a mushroom .	Ophidiophobia
13. Mina is scared of the figure eight .	Pupaphobia
14. Teddy can't look at a puppet without getting sick to his stomach.	Tachophobia
15. Ellen sweeps constantly because she can't handle dust .	Xanthophobia

The Answer Key for this activity is provided on the next page.

Name: _____

Answer Key

1. **A.** Achluophobia
2. **E.** Graphophobia
3. **L.** Ophidiophobia
4. **D.** Francophobia
5. **B.** Cryophobia
6. **I.** Melissophobia
7. **H.** Ligyrophobia
8. **N.** Tachophobia
9. **O.** Xanthophobia
10. **F.** Heliophobia
11. **C.** Deipnophobia
12. **J.** Mycophobia
13. **K.** Octophobia
14. **M.** Pupaphobia
15. **G.** Koniophobia

Name: _____

- 2.** How many students reported that they had the top fear? _____
The second fear? _____
The third fear? _____
The fourth fear? _____
The fifth fear? _____

- 3.** Did anyone write down a fear that surprised you? What was it?

Part Three:

Compare your answers with your classmates. Together, figure out the five most common fears of everyone surveyed. Fill out the list below.

Top Five Fears

- 1.** _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Do *you* share any of these fears? Explain.

Name: _____

Fear, anxiety, and phobias make for good entertainment. Think about the last thriller you saw or scary book that you read—did you like it? Did it really scare you? Why are there so many books, movies, and TV shows that deal with frightening situations?

Take a closer look at the way fear is portrayed in the media. Choose one movie, book or TV show that either:

is meant to scare you (thrillers, horror movies or books, etc)

OR

deals with fear, anxiety, or phobias as a main issue.

Then, watch the movie or read the book, paying close attention to how you feel. Finally, answer the questions below. Use an additional sheet of paper if necessary.

- 1.** Which movie, book, or TV show did you choose?

- 2.** How did you feel when you were watching or reading? Did you have any physical responses, like a racing heart or quickened breathing?

- 3.** If you chose option A: would the movie, show, or book succeed in scaring most people? If so, what made it so frightening? If not, why not?

- 4.** If you chose option B: did the movie, show, or book portray fear and anxiety realistically? Given what you know about the fight or flight response and anxiety disorders, was the portrayal accurate? Why or why not?

- 5.** Do you enjoy getting scared when you watch movies or read books? Why or why not?

- 6.** Why do you think scary media are so popular?

Name: _____

Spiders. Heights. Looking stupid in front of friends. Everybody is afraid of something, but fear doesn't have to control our lives. We can't overcome our fears without really assessing them—once we understand why we get nervous about certain things, we can figure out how to best overcome our anxieties when they pose a problem. Get to the bottom of your personal fears and anxieties by answering these questions on a separate sheet of paper.

1. What are you afraid of? Jot down four or five things that scare you.
2. Look over your answers to question 1. Which one scares you the most?
3. On a scale of 1-10, 1 meaning “it scares me a little bit” and 10 being “this terrifies me,” rank your number one fear.
4. Think about the last time you felt this fear very strongly. What was the situation? How did you respond? What was the outcome of the situation?
5. Have you always had this fear, or did you develop it recently?
6. Can you think of a reason why you have this fear? Can you trace it back to an event in your past?
7. What is it about your number one fear that is so frightening? What is the worst thing that could happen to you if you had to confront this fear?

Example: I'm afraid of flying because the plane might crash.

I'm afraid of giving a speech because everyone might think I'm stupid and my friends won't want to hang out with me anymore.

8. Now be honest: how likely is it that your answer to question 7 would really happen? Now, think about a strategy you can use to cope with this fear.
9. What are some strategies you can use to calm yourself when you first start to feel afraid or anxious?

Example: deep breathing, think about something else

10. Facing your fears gradually is the best way to overcome them. What could be the first step to facing yours in a controlled setting?

Example: I'm afraid of spiders, so I could start by watching a spider at the pet store without touching it.

11. Talking to others about your fears can also be a big help. Who would you feel comfortable talking to about your fear?

Name: _____

What are the different types of anxiety disorders? How can they be treated? Find out by researching the answers to the questions below. You can find information at your school and local library as well as on the Internet. Use the *Resource Tracker* to collect your information. Choose either topic A or B, then gather information. Write a short (one-to-two page) report on your findings.

TOPIC A: ANXIETY DISORDERS

There are several different kinds of mental health problems all grouped under the term “anxiety disorders.” Focus on one of the following as you research.

Generalized Anxiety Disorder
Panic Disorder
Agoraphobia
Social phobia/Social Anxiety Disorder
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

When you are writing your paper, consider the following questions:

What are the symptoms of this disorder?
How many people suffer from this disorder?
Who is at the highest risk for developing this disorder?
What does it feel like to have this disorder?
What are the most common treatments for this disorder?

TOPIC B: TREATMENTS

Treatments for anxiety disorders are usually individualized—what works for one person might not work for another. What kind of professional options do anxiety disorder sufferers have? Pick one of the following treatments.

Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy
Desensitization/Virtual Reality Exposure
Drug Therapy

When you are writing your paper, consider the following questions:

How does this treatment work?
Who administers the treatment?
What kind of anxiety disorders are commonly treated with this method?
How effective is this treatment?

Name: _____

ACTIVITY 5B
RESOURCE TRACKER

Title of book or article:	Title of book or article:
Author(s):	Author(s):
Published by / URL:	Published by / URL:
Copyright date:	Copyright date:
Subject covered:	Subject covered:
Quote(s):	Quote(s):
Notes:	Notes:

Name: _____

Tests can be nerve-wracking. Whether it's a pop quiz or the SATs, you want to do well—but getting too anxious about your performance can actually make you do worse!

Get test anxiety under control by coming up with some quick strategies for dealing with it. One of the best ways to reduce anxiety is to be well prepared, so start your plan of attack even before it comes time to take the exam.

Think up some ways you can diminish test anxiety in class, while studying, and during the test. By preparing now, you'll be ready when nervousness strikes. For each of the questions below, fill in your own plan of attack on a separate sheet of paper.

In Class

Make sure you'll be ready for the exam by learning more effectively the first time around.

How can I take better notes?

How can I remember class readings better?

What can I do if I don't understand something in class?

While Studying

Nip your nervousness in the bud by getting the information down cold.

How far ahead of the test do I need to start studying to make sure I have enough time?

Where is the best place for me to study?

Who can help me study?

How can I quiz myself?

What should I do if I start feeling overwhelmed?

Taking the Test

Calm yourself during the exam by boosting your confidence.

Are there any phrases I can use to remind myself that I'm well-prepared?

What should I do if I forget something important?

What kinds of relaxation techniques can I use if I get too anxious?

Name: _____

People who suffer from social phobia may be afraid that they will appear foolish or stupid, or that they will say or do something embarrassing—but by focusing on the worst thing that could possibly happen, they miss out on opportunities to have fun and make new friends. The teens below all get nervous in social situations. Put their fears and anxieties in perspective by thinking up the best-case scenario, the worst-case scenario—and finally, what will probably happen. Be creative!

Example: Faith’s physics class is going on a field trip to an amusement park with a class from another nearby high school. The students from both classes will be mixed up and put into groups to work on physics problems. Faith feels fairly comfortable with her classmates because she has known them since kindergarten, but she is really nervous about working with strangers for an entire day.

Best-case scenario: Faith ends up working with the nephew of a talent scout. When the nephew introduces Faith to his aunt, she loves Faith’s look, flies her to New York, and puts her on the cover of Vogue.

Worst-case scenario: Faith’s group makes fun of her all day. The low point comes when she throws up her ice cream sundae after riding the tilt-a-whirl; somebody takes a picture, and photocopies show up all over school the next day. All her friends are too embarrassed to be seen with her.

Probable scenario: Faith’s group is nice and they get all their physics problems right. They hang out all day and ride all the roller coasters together.

1. Amy

Amy is a great swimmer and her high school coach has suggested that she try out for a local traveling team. If she makes the team, she’ll have a chance to compete year-round and get a lot better—but she’s really nervous she’ll humiliate herself at the tryouts.

Best-case scenario: _____

Worst-case scenario: _____

Probable scenario: _____

This activity is continued on the next page.

Name: _____

2. Pedro

Pedro has a crush on a girl from school, but he's too shy to talk to her. His best friend always encourages him to make a move, but Pedro is terrified that she'll reject him. The homecoming dance is in a few weeks, and Pedro's friend insists this is the perfect time to ask her out.

Best-case scenario: _____

Worst-case scenario: _____

Probable scenario: _____

3. Lia

Lia likes spending time with a few close friends, but gets butterflies in her stomach when she's around a lot of people. One of her friends has a birthday coming up, but a ton of people from school will be at the party. Lia wants to celebrate with her friend, but she's afraid she'll do something stupid in front of the crowd.

Best-case scenario: _____

Worst-case scenario: _____

Probable scenario: _____

4. Aaron

Aaron is great at painting, drawing, and sculpting. His teacher tells him he has a good chance of winning first prize at the school's art show. The prize is \$100, which Aaron could really use for some new paints. But if he enters he'll have to talk to all the judges and visitors. He's so nervous he almost can't bring himself to enter.

Best-case scenario: _____

Worst-case scenario: _____

Probable scenario: _____

Name: _____

It's normal to be afraid sometimes, but fears become a problem when they interfere with daily life and cause you to miss out on fun and rewarding activities. Take a closer look at all the negative consequences of fear and anxiety. Why would anyone want to live with these consequences when he or she could get help to overcome them?

Each of these students has a fear that is getting in the way of their quality of life. For each, think of three negative consequences they face as a result.

Example: *Raul is extremely scared of dogs.*

Negative consequences:

He can't visit friends who own dogs

He can't walk around outside in case he runs into a dog

He will never enjoy the companionship of a pet dog

1. Noelle is always worried about being in a car crash.

Negative Consequences: _____

2. Steve gets weak in the knees when he thinks about giving a speech.

Negative Consequences: _____

3. Naomi is generally irritable, worried, and tense all the time.

Negative Consequences: _____

This activity is continued on the next page.

Name: _____

4. Dave gets extremely nervous when he is around people he doesn't know.

**Negative
Consequences:**

5. Annika freezes up when she has to take an important test.

**Negative
Consequences:**

6. Vince is terrified of heights.

**Negative
Consequences:**

FACT SHEETS

Name: _____

Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)

Someone who has GAD has suffered from unrealistic, excessive worry for at least six months. The worry is not directed at any specific object or situation; instead, sufferers feel a broad sense of gloom or dread. Symptoms include fatigue, headaches, muscle tension or aches, trembling, twitching, irritability, and sweating.

Panic Disorder

On top of feeling a high level of anxiety, people with panic disorder also suffer panic attacks, which are sudden moments of intense panic. Someone having a panic attack may experience a racing heart, sweat profusely, feel weak or dizzy, feel flushed or chilled, have an upset stomach, or be overwhelmed with a sense of dread or doom. Sufferers may think they are having a heart attack or dying. Some people with panic disorder also have agoraphobia, an irrational fear that a panic attack will occur in a public or unfamiliar place. They avoid situations that make them nervous, including places where they've had panic attacks in the past.

Social Phobia/Social Anxiety Disorder

Social phobia is characterized by a persistent fear of judgment and humiliation in front of others. Sometimes this fear is limited to certain situations, such as eating, speaking, or writing in public, or of using public restrooms. In other cases, someone with social phobia will feel anxious any time he or she is around other people. Physical signs include blushing, sweating, trembling, nausea, and difficulty talking. Social phobia can make it very hard to function in school, work, and relationships.

Specific Phobias

A specific phobia is an extreme and irrational fear of a certain object or situation. Often, the sufferer will realize that the fear is unreasonable, but will not be able to control his or her anxious reaction. Some common phobias include acrophobia (fear of heights), claustrophobia (fear of enclosed spaces), and hematophobia (fear of blood).

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Someone with PTSD suffers from anxiety and fear in the aftermath of a traumatic event, such as war, mugging, rape, a car accident, or a natural disaster. Sometimes the victim will relive the event in nightmares or intense memories, and may avoid people or situations that remind him or her of the trauma.

Obsessive-Compulsive disorder (OCD)

OCD is characterized by uncontrollable thoughts and rituals that the sufferer feels she has to perform to relieve anxiety. Common fixations include cleanliness and organization; someone with OCD might wash her hands over and over or spend a lot of time checking to make sure everything around her is exactly in its place. Sufferers often realize their thoughts and actions are unreasonable, but they still spend a lot of time every day attending to them.

Name: _____

- Approximately 19 million American adults have anxiety disorders.
- Anxiety disorders are the most common emotional disorders.
- Women are about twice as likely to suffer from most anxiety disorders, but men and women are about equally likely to have social phobia.
- Young people who don't get treatment for an anxiety disorder have a higher risk of poor performance in school, less developed social skills, and substance abuse problems.
- Only about one third of sufferers get the treatment they need to overcome their disorder.
- About four million adult Americans have generalized anxiety disorder.
- Generalized anxiety disorder is usually accompanied by another anxiety disorder.
- Money, health, and work are some of the most common worries on which people with generalized anxiety disorder fixate.
- Panic disorder affects about 2.4 million adult Americans.
- A panic attack will usually last about ten minutes.
- Social phobia affects about 5.3 million adult Americans.
- Joining a self-help group, talking to supportive friends and family members, and meditation are all actions that have all been used successfully to treat anxiety disorders.

Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy

What it does: changes the way a sufferer thinks about his fear as well as the way he reacts to the things that cause him anxiety.

How it works: the “cognitive” part of cognitive-behavioral therapy changes destructive thinking patterns by helping the sufferer to see that her fears are irrational and unreasonable. A therapist will work with the patient to help her separate realistic concerns from irrational fears. The “behavioral” part of the therapy helps give the patient control over her reactions, often by gradually exposing her to the cause of her fear (see “desensitization” below). The therapist will bring the patient into contact with the things that scare her so that she can see that they really don’t pose a threat.

Desensitization

What it does: a key component of behavioral therapy, desensitization involves exposing a person to the things that cause him fear in a gradual, controlled manner so that he learns they are not really dangerous.

How it works: the patient and the therapist work up to confronting the patient’s fear by first confronting similar, less scary situations or objects. For example, if a person is afraid of snakes, the first step might be to look at a picture of a snake in a book. When the patient can do this with no anxiety, he could move on to looking at a snake in a cage. Finally, when the patient is ready, he will confront his fear head-on by actually holding a snake. Desensitization can also be performed using virtual reality; patients face their fears in a computer-generated, totally controlled world.

Drug Therapy

What it does: controls the symptoms of a disorder by addressing its biological component.

How it works: there are several types of drugs used to treat anxiety disorders. Antidepressants such as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) and tricyclics affect the balance of serotonin in the brain, a chemical that has been linked with anxiety. Monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs) prevent the breakdown of serotonin by blocking a certain brain enzyme. Benzodiazepines address the symptoms of anxiety. Beta-blockers also treat anxiety symptoms by reducing the body’s ability to produce adrenaline.

Name: _____

Even the coolest, most comfortable people sometimes get anxious. The difference between appearing totally at ease and becoming a nervous wreck is sometimes as simple as using a few tips to control fear before it takes over.

CONTROL YOUR BREATHING

One of the first signs of fear is quickened breathing—the fight or flight response gets the body ready to either face a threat or run away by increasing the amount of oxygen you take in. If you concentrate on breathing deeply and regularly, it's harder for the fight or flight response to run away with *you*.

FOCUS ON THE TASK

Try not to think about how nervous you feel, or how other people are reacting to you. Instead, put all your energy into the task at hand, like giving your speech or taking your exam. Once you get absorbed, you may even forget to be afraid.

ASSESS YOUR FEARS

Think about what scares you in a rational way—ask yourself exactly what you are really concerned about and if it is truly likely to happen. Once you get to the bottom of your worries, you can see that they don't pose a large threat.

TELL SOMEONE

Sharing your concerns can take a big weight off your shoulders. Someone you trust, such as a friend, parent, or teacher, can help you work through your fears and show you that you are not alone.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Worries and fears will affect you more if you are tired or unhealthy. Make sure you are at your strongest by getting enough sleep, exercising, eating healthfully, and avoiding alcohol and drugs.

LEARN ABOUT YOUR FEAR

Knowledge is power. The more you know about what frightens you, the more control you have.

Name: _____

There's no reason to suffer from fear and anxiety when they are both highly treatable. If you or a friend needs some help, try these resources:

Parents: the support of your family is an important part of overcoming fears. Let your parents know about your problem so that they can help you find the best treatment.

School counselor: check if your school counselor can work with you on your fear of public speaking or taking tests. If there is no formal program in place, your counselor can likely direct you to one.

Seminars or classes: some schools and colleges offer short courses on preparing for tests or dealing with stress. Check if any local schools have upcoming programs.

Family doctor: your doctor can talk to you about your worries to determine if you may have an anxiety disorder, or if something else is going on. Your doctor will also be able to refer you to a specialist, if needed.

Mental health professional: several organizations can help direct you to a doctor who specializes in anxiety disorders. Try these resources:

The National Institute of Mental Health
www.nimh.nih.gov
1-866-615-6464

Anxiety Disorders Association of America
www.adaa.org
1-240-485-1001

Name: _____

The American Psychiatric Association

www.psych.org

The Anxiety Disorders Association of America

www.adaa.org

The National Institute of Mental Health

www.nimh.nih.gov

Psychology Phobias Glossary

http://psychology.about.com/library/bl/blglos_phobias.htm

Name: _____

HUMAN RELATIONS MEDIA

OTHER PROGRAMS

OTHER MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS
FROM HUMAN RELATIONS MEDIA

<i>Stressed Out! Stress Management 101</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>It's Never Too Late: Stopping Teen Suicide</i>	video/print or DVD/print
<i>Hidden Scars, Silent Wounds: Understanding Self-Injury</i>	video/print
<i>Sad, Angry, Lonely And Scared: The Masks of Depression</i>	video/print
<i>Teenagers and Depression</i>	folding display
<i>When Someone Dies: Bereavement and Loss</i>	video/print or DVD/print

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