

BREAK THROUGH FEAR AND SELF DOUBT

A GUIDE TO OVERCOMING FEAR AND SELF-DOUBT



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Chapter 1

Fear vs. Phobia?

All of us have fears or phobias – some more concrete and others founded in our imaginations. It's completely normal to have them and, at times, they help us to become better versions of ourselves and to push our own limits and selves to achieve higher and better outcomes. That said, this is not always the case; fears and phobias can hold us back from life experiences and from our success – these self-imposed limitations hinder our development and achievements. It is the latter of these two cases that we will focus on, exploring how to break through these fears and phobias to better take control of your own life.

Fear or Phobia

Are fears and phobias the same or two separate entities? Most dictionaries agree in defining a fear as a distressing emotion aroused by a specific threat or impending event – an effect of something that causes fear and apprehension. In contrast, most dictionaries' definitions for the word “phobia” relate to a persistent, irrational fear of a specific object, activity, or situation. The difference is subtle, but it is there.

For example, you might “fear” spiders – however, that fear is likely something that carries with you day in and day out; this makes it a phobia. It is an ongoing fear – not entirely founded – that persists. That said, you may fear crawling into an abandoned building because you are likely to encounter spiders – this is a fear. Fear refers to a specific situation or event, whereas a phobia refers to a dislike or apprehension of a specific event or item on an ongoing basis that is not specifically situational.

The Top 15 Fears and Phobias

Because phobias are more ongoing in nature, whereas fears are situation-based, it is typically more common for people to share phobias than fears. The following are the top 15 fears and phobias as compiled from a variety of research and medical sources.

- ☑ **Acrophobia** – Fear of heights
- ☑ **Claustrophobia** – Fear of being in an enclosed space. Elevators, MRI machines, closets, and closed in hallways are all common culprits.
- ☑ **Brontophobia** – Fear of thunder and lightening. This fear is most commonly found in children, though for some does extend into adulthood
- ☑ **Mysophobia** – Fear of germs
- ☑ **Social Phobia** – This excessive fear of social situations is intimately related to anxiety.

- ☑ **Necrophobia** – Fear of anything related to death, including funeral homes, coffins, cadavers, hearses, etc.
- ☑ **Aerophobia** – Fear of flight – this refers to more than simple plane rides, also extending to sports like hang gliding, parasailing, hot air ballooning, and others.
- ☑ **Carcinophobia** – Fear of acquiring cancer. This particular phobia has grown exponentially as we as a society have learned more about and become more aware of various cancers.
- ☑ **Ophidiophobia** – The fear of snakes
- ☑ **Agoraphobia** – The fear of situations in which escape is difficult – this fear is sometimes explained as having a fear of open spaces. For example, people with agoraphobia might avoid large public gatherings, such as concerts or festivals. Approximately 33 percent of people with a panic disorder in time develop agoraphobia.
- ☑ **Trypanophobia** – The fear of injections. Like many phobias, this fear often goes untreated because people avoid the triggering object and situation.
- ☑ **Nyctophobia** – Fear of the Dark – This fear is common and generally found in children. It typically has onset around the time that the child begins developing a more active imagination and in most cases lasts just six months; if it lasts more than six months and causes extreme anxiety, the fear becomes diagnosed as a phobia.
- ☑ **Nosophobia** – Fear of Having a Disease. This is related to hypochondriasis which is the persistent fear of having an unspecified disease. Sufferers of both spend ample time at the doctor's office.
- ☑ **Fear of public speaking**
- ☑ **Fear of failure**

Every fear and every phobia is a bit different for each individual. Though all are treatable, the precise methods to treat each vary. Learn more about the various phobias and fears and how to conquer them to move forward with your life and success.

This book will help you to understand the different types of fears and phobias and how you can conquer each one of them to achieve your breakthrough.

Chapter 2

Beat Your Fear of Career Advancement

We are raised to push forward, aiming to reach the “top” of our chosen career path and ranks. However, for some, that goal and motivation transforms into something else: fear.

Fear of advancing in a career may confuse non-sufferers, but for many, the fear is all too real. It isn't necessarily a fear of receiving a promotion or of becoming an executive itself – more so, it's a fear of the side effects of this success.

For example, a lawyer may want to be successful in their practice, but fear whether they are on the right side of the fight. They may be afraid of selling out or of losing their attachment to their original cause. A doctor may want to make it through their residency, but is also afraid of the advancement in their career as getting that advancement means a new level of accountability and responsibility.

This fear carries through every career out there and is not limited by gender, age, or any other demographic; everyone is equally susceptible.

Exploring the Fear of Career Advancement

Like other “soft” fears, the fear of career advancement is often rooted in other fears or apprehensions. Some of these underlying fears might include (but are not limited to):

- Fear of failure
- Fear of letting someone down whose approval means a lot to you
- Fear of taking a risk
- Fear of not being able to meet expectations in a new role
- Fear of not being able to handle the pressure
- Fear of increased responsibility or accountability
- Fear of leading others or of securing approval from team members or peers
- Fear of getting “stuck” in a role or career path



Unlike many phobias, the fear of career advancement is typically not accompanied by physical symptoms, such as sweating, nausea, dizziness, etc. Instead, symptoms include more concrete actions. For example:

- Self-sabotage – people do not often do this intentionally, necessarily, but those around them can often see that they self sabotage their own success and advancement time and again
- Lack of interest in the review process
- Does not step up to new opportunities within the team
- Does not express an interest in advancement or initiate discussions about career potential and next steps
- Clings to baseline tasks and more junior-level roles willingly

Overcoming the Fear of Career Advancement

Because the fear of career advancement can manifest as a side effect of so many other fears, not everyone's fear will show the same way. That said, while treatment and efforts to overcome the fear will likely share commonalities, not everyone's treatment will be the same. Most sufferers will find it beneficial to engage in verbal therapy which may include behavioral therapy to address behavioral issues and concerns. Therapy will most likely include a verbal exploration of the sufferer's feelings and self expectations to determine the causes of their fear and any underlying sub-fears. By discovering the roots of their fear of career advancement, the therapist or coach is better able to develop a specialized path forward to address the individual feelings and emotions that contribute to their overall fear.

Chapter 3

Overcome Your Agoraphobia, Reclaim Your Life

It started off quite simply... given the numerous and growing number of public shootings in the past years, you chose to be careful in the places you frequented. You began to avoid large crowds and things like public festivals or fireworks displays – there was just too much room for error and for something to go awry.

But that fear and your avoidance of public continued to grow.

You began to feel fearful in everyday places that you previously felt safe – even the grocery store became scary. It grew to transportation, such as busses or the metro – anything that made you feel confined and trapped, like you wouldn't be able to escape if you needed to.

These days, you barely leave the house unless forced and have even had to leave your job to find one that would allow you to work from the safety of your home.

To say the least, your fear has grown to become life changing. You no longer see your friends. You no longer enjoy going out. And your career has changed and switched paths.

What started as a fear has bloomed into uncontrollable agoraphobia – and it is now controlling you.

Exploring Agoraphobia

Agoraphobia is not just one phobia, but rather a grouping of various phobias that can include fears of leaving the home, fears of public or open spaces – such as shopping malls, movie theaters, or concerts – and travelling alone.

This branch of panic disorders causes the sufferer to avoid situations that may cause them to feel trapped, helpless, or embarrassed. Sufferers often feel unprotected in most situations or locations, often avoiding them all together, though some are able to face public places with the help of a familiar companion, such as a close friend or family member.

Studies estimate that approximately 3.2 million adults within the United States (or approximately 2.2 percent) suffer from this life changing phobia.

Most agoraphobia stems from a conditioned response – for example, a strong reaction following 9/11 and an empathetic response that turned to severe fear of being in a similar environment in the future.

People officially diagnosed with agoraphobia have a fear or anxiety about a minimum of two of the following situations:

- Being in enclosed spaces, such as shopping malls, movie theaters, or schools
- Standing in line or being in a crowd
- Leaving their home by themselves
- Being in an open space, such as a park, parking lot, or public street, or on a bridge
- Using public transportation, including, but not limited to, a boat, plane, train, bus, or metro system

Their fears and anxieties are more than just closely held – they impact their relationships and how they live their life, often times restricting their options, behaviors, and self. They avoid situations that put them in the way of encountering the above scenarios, not only missing out on opportunities, but often destroying their own progress both personally and professionally.

Overcoming Your Agoraphobia

Like most phobias, to overcome agoraphobia, you have to look it in the eye. Because it is a form of a panic disorder, therapy is a must for most people. Cognitive behavioral therapy is one form commonly used, though medicinal approaches are also taken quite frequently for this phobia.

Of course, the first step to overcoming your phobia is to explore your own behavior and fear to determine whether your reactions are hindering your own life and progress. If your fear has become life changing, altering your relationships, personal life, and preventing your professional growth and performance, now is the time to take action.

Chapter 4

When Blushing Goes Beyond Cute - Conquering Chronic Blushing

We've all seen it in classic movies – the heroine or damsel has a coy moment, often accompanied by a toe pop, shy look, or blushing – all of which her co-star of course finds adorable. And sure, blushing can be cute and even sweet and flirtatious. But unfortunately obsessive blushing that pops up during business meetings or networking events has no place and is far from the cuteness they show in those Hollywood blockbusters.



No, your blushing is downright embarrassing, making itself known in the most inappropriate and inopportune of times. Sure, it happens when you're embarrassed, just as it does for everyone else. But it also happens at just about every turn, saying hello to your boss, while meeting a new business associate, when you're making an important pitch presentation to a potential client, even when you greet your children's friends and their parents. It's inopportune, it's preventing your professional movement, and it's downright debilitating.

About Chronic Blushing

Blushing in itself is a perfectly natural reaction – a psychological one, in fact, that appears when we feel embarrassed or nervous. While this social giveaway can be annoying, it is far worse for sufferers of chronic blushing – also known as pathological blushing.

Standard blushing comes at a variety of triggers, such as:

- Shyness
- Nervousness
- Being put on the spot
- Speaking in front of a group of strangers
- Lying or hiding something

However, chronic blushing can hit at any moment – and therein lies the difference between conventional and pathological blushing.

Pathological blushing comes in several different forms:

Social Anxiety

Physiologically speaking, blushing occurs as a result of a psychological reaction – that reaction is often a result of some form of social anxiety. For example, you know that you are prone to blushing when speaking in front of

a group – so naturally, as you prepare to speak in front of a group, you are thinking about what you are going to say and how you are going to act. Since blushing is a part of your natural reactions, that blushing comes to mind – and as a result, you wind up in a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The good news is that because your blushing is part of a psychological reaction, it can be tamed.

Physical Causes

There are several physical reactions that cause chronic blushing to be an effect of an actual physical disorder. Many of these have to do with blood vessels and circulation that prevent blood from reaching the tissues or cause spontaneous rushes of blood to concentrated areas.

Most chronic blushing patients seek help in overcoming their conditions in their 20's and 30's, though there are of course patients of all ages looking to overcome their challenge.

Most of the time, chronic blushing occurs as a result of a repetitive embarrassing experience – in which case it would fall under the social anxiety category. The consistent negative experience that results in blushing essentially conditions that patient into always blushing in similar situations; the issue often only blossoms from there, spreading into other situations.

Overcoming Chronic Blushing

In rare cases where chronic blushing is truly a result of a neurological or physiological disorder, there are medicinal and surgical treatments available. However, for the majority of patients, we choose to work within the mind, reconditioning our systems to revert to “normal” patterns of blushing by overcoming fears and anxieties.

Blushing will always be a part of our lives and natural responses – and that's okay – it's about bringing down the blushing to occur in only line with conventional blushing situations.

Chapter 5

Open Doors By Overcoming Your Fear of Claustrophobia

Claustrophobia is perhaps one of the most well-known and most crippling disorders out there. It affects people professionally and personally in the most common of situations.

Imagine trying to knock out of a park a new client pitch when you feel like the walls of the room are closing in on you, or enjoying a family trip to a theme park when you can't enjoy half of the rides. Try living in a place like New York City when the mere thought of riding an elevator makes you sweaty and nauseous.

Living with claustrophobia is more than just stressful – at times, it's downright paralyzing. And, unfortunately, it causes many of life's activities and experiences to be more than just uncomfortable or inconvenient – it causes them to be impossible and terrifying.

Claustrophobia seeps into every aspect of life, both personal and professional. It makes sufferers miss out on life experiences and daily conveniences, but it also can hold them back professionally due to an inability to participate in meetings that occur in small spaces and other important office activities.

No one should have to live in fear – learn to move past your fear of claustrophobia and to open doors to new opportunities.

Exploring Claustrophobia

Claustrophobia is a fear of small, enclosed spaces. Though each sufferer experiences the effects of this paralyzing phobia differently, many feel as though the walls are closing in on them when they are in closed spaces or are fearful of becoming entrapped in that space. Others cite feeling as though the air supply is lacking and that they will suffocate.

Many activities that much of the population would consider a part of life are made impossible for claustrophobia sufferers to enjoy. For example, elevators are often a strict no-go, as are things like crawl spaces, airplanes, or small and crowded rooms – as are often found in not only homes, but business meetings or networking events. Sufferers are unlikely to be able to enjoy adventures, such as spelunking or scuba diving. Many cannot ride roller coasters.



Claustrophobia goes beyond simply fearing these activities and spaces – sufferers experience physical side effects, just some of which include:

- Difficulty breathing
- Nausea
- Increased heart rate
- Perspiration
- Dizziness

Researchers do not yet know the exact causes of claustrophobia, but doctors and psychologists have found roots in both physical and psychological causes. Physically, doctors have found the amygdala, a small structure in the brain that controls fear, to be smaller in people that have fear and panic disorders, such as claustrophobia. Psychologically, professionals have found that many sufferers experience claustrophobia as a result of conditioning experienced earlier in their lives. For example, a child locked in a small space might later manifest that fear as claustrophobia. Other negative life experiences might include being in a small dark space, unable to find the light switch or getting a limb stuck in a fence and not being able to escape it. There are countless scenarios that might influence one's propensity for claustrophobia.

Overcoming Claustrophobia

Because claustrophobia is a deeply rooted phobia, it can be quite difficult to conquer – however, it is possible.

Most patients treat claustrophobia via psychotherapy that utilizes any number of techniques and tools. Systematic desensitization, flooding, and the Stop! Techniques are all popular methods, though there are many others out there that have produced successful results, such as the explorative work being done in immersive virtual reality.

Chapter 6

Find New Success and Social Comfort – Overcome Excessive Blushing and Sweating

We've all been there...

Perhaps at a work meeting, you look across the table and see a coworker excessively sweating and seeming very nervous. Or at a networking event – the air conditioning is working just fine, yet someone in the room seems quite uncomfortable and is literally dripping from sweat. The blushing, the sweating – you know something is wrong, but can't quite tell what.



Even worse is when it's happening to you. And it doesn't take much. At that meeting, a project leader asks you a question – a question that you answer perfectly well, yet you blush incessantly and after you complete your answer, feel the telltale sign of a bead of sweat dripping down your neck.

Truth be told, everyone gets nervous and everyone blushes from time to time or breaks into a sweat; the difference is in the frequency and causes. For you, it seems like everything pushes you into excessive blushing and sweating. It's embarrassing, it's frustrating, and you know that it's holding you back – socially and professionally.

Exploring Excessive Sweating and Blushing

Excessive sweating has a variety of causes, some of which are medically induced and others which can be a result of anxiety or extreme nervousness. Medically speaking, excessive sweating may be a sign of diabetes, an infection, or a thyroid disorder. In medical cases, patients often find themselves sweating profusely with everyday tasks, such as taking a walk or cleaning – anything that might typically raise the heart rate slightly, but yet far from a target working zone for cardio exercise.

On the flip side, people who experience excessive sweating for non-medical reasons find that they sweat for any number of reasons. For example, they could be sitting perfectly still, but find themselves sweating when the spotlight is cast on them in a meeting or even by noticing someone's eyes linger on them while walking down the street. This type of excessive sweating typically pairs with other symptom, such as an elevated heart rate, nervousness, nausea, and even anxious thoughts.

As for excessive blushing, blushing is a psychological reaction that typically triggers as a result of shyness, nervousness, or deception. While everyone blushes – just as everyone sweats, the difference lies in the frequency and cause of the blushing.

For example, standard blushing might occur when a student answers incorrectly in front of the class or when, while attending a conference, the speaker calls you out in front of all the attendees with a question, putting you

on the spot. For excessive blushers, it might occur for more common occurrences, such as a co-worker saying hello in the break room or while greeting a friend. This type of blushing typically holds ties to social anxiety, though there are rare physical causes as well which typically relate to blood vessel and circulation issues.

Overcoming Excessive Sweating and Blushing

The first step to stopping your embarrassment caused by excessive sweating and blushing, you must first assess the pattern in which your problem appears. Are there specific causes or situations? Or does it seemingly happen randomly in any (and every) circumstance? Consider a medical evaluation to rule out underlying medical causes, such as circulatory or cardio-thoracic issues. If there is not a medical cause, odds are that your problem comes back to anxiety.

Your path to overcoming your excessive sweating and blushing may include verbal and behavioral therapy, medicinal approaches, or a combination of the two – but regardless of which method you use, you must first take a first step to facing your issues.

Chapter 7

Beat Your Fear of Being Disliked

Sure, everyone wants to be well liked among their peers – but when this desire to be liked transforms, this natural tendency can become a detrimental fear that eats away at a person and works against them, hindering their progress personally and professionally.

In most cases, everyone experiences some resistance when entering new social situations – a bit of hesitation and the idea that they may not be accepted surely runs through their head. However, confident people push those thoughts out of their minds, easily entering social situations, seemingly blossoming in them.

In contrast, people who have a fear of being disliked to a severe scale may feel highly self-conscious and anxious to such a degree that they may avoid the social situation all together.

Extreme cases of this are often diagnosed as something called “**Avoidant Personality Disorder.**”



Exploring Avoidant Personality Disorder

Avoidant personality disorder can manifest in a variety of ways, but people already prone to an extreme fear of being disliked are particularly susceptible. These individuals are often extremely sensitive to negative receptions among their peers and tend to describe themselves as lonely, anxious, and generally unwanted and isolated.

There is not a singular cause of this disorder or fear, but many experts suspect that there are often experiences, such as bullying or childhood neglect to blame. Most often, the diagnosis comes in early adulthood, perhaps because this is the stage in which the disorder starts interfering with life in tangibly harmful ways, such as inability to land or keep a job.

Sufferers may find that it is difficult for them to attend or conduct a successful interview. When they do get hired, they are likely to experience difficulties in meeting and socializing with their coworkers and peers on a social level, but also in the routine of daily business. This inability to enter social situations – even those necessary to perform their job – makes it difficult for them to succeed

People with avoidant personality disorder often experience symptoms such as:

- Self-imposed social isolation
- Hypersensitivity to social criticism and peer rejection
- Feelings of inadequacy
- Highly self-conscious
- Feelings of inferiority and loneliness

Overcoming Fear of Being Disliked

Overcoming a fear of being disliked – or in extreme situations, avoidant personality disorder, is difficult due to its intensely emotional nature, however it is possible, not to mention worthwhile.

Successfully overcoming this fear will not only help the sufferer to develop more meaningful relationships, such as friendships or relationships of a romantic nature, but also to build successful careers from which their fear would otherwise most likely prevent them from attaining.

For some, overcoming their fear is simply a matter of self-conditioning – intentionally putting oneself in social situations and forcing yourself to interact. That may be as small of an action as saying “hello” to a stranger on the street or a larger scale engagement, such as attending a social function with office co-workers. Overtime, you will build up your confidence and ability.

For others, this type of self-conditioning will not immediately be possible and they may require a more clinical, therapeutic approach.

Everyone’s fear manifests in different ways and requires individual attention to properly address and overcome it; what is important is that you treat your fear, facing it head on in order to overcome it and open new doors in every facet of your life. Remember – no matter how afraid you may be, you have nothing to lose by trying, but everything to gain.

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