

Is Your Anxiety a Phobia?

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Fear of public speaking is very common. It has been estimated that around 75% of people experience fear or anxiety while speaking in front of an audience. Now that you know the differences between fear and anxiety let's turn our attention to the fact that prolonged anxiety has a negative impact on our quality of life, and may lead to phobias.

If you want to know whether you are dealing with a phobia or not, it seems natural to first learn about the essence of phobias. Before that happens, however, you should know that phobias are very common, and if you recognize that you have one, that doesn't mean that there's something wrong with you.



The banner features the Explorable logo (a flask icon) and the text "EXPLORABLE Quiz Time!". Below the logo are three quiz cards: "Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2" with a roller skates image, "Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2" with a colored pencils image, and "Quiz: Flags in Europe" with a Ferris wheel image. A "See all quizzes =>" link is at the bottom right.

Pin It Down

Identifying a phobic reaction is the first step in overcoming anxiety and fear, even if it feels impossible at this moment. Of course, it is far from impossible, but it's not overly simple either. What you need is a dose of determination, patience, and self-encouragement. And remember – you are not alone we are here to help you deal with this common, yet unpleasant issue!

What Makes Fear Phobic

We may experience phobic fear both when we are objectively faced with a subject or situation, that we are anxious about, and when we think that it may happen in the future. Being aware of that fact that this anxiety is irrational or exaggerated, it doesn't decrease it.

To define a reaction as phobic, your anxiety must lead to a certain level of impairment. For example, if you have a phobic fear of public speaking, you may feel anxious days, even weeks before your speech.

Obviously, this type of anxiety influences your life - by worrying about the speech often, you invest a lot of your time and energy in imagining countless devastating scenarios, or attempting to get out of your public speaking engagement.

Symptoms of Phobia

- You are afraid of a specific object or situation - in this case - public speaking
- Your fear is intensive and pervasive
- Your fear is irrational and ungrounded
- You obsessively strive to avoid the phobic object or situation
- You experience some of the following emotional symptoms: overwhelming anxiety or panic, a strong desire to escape or avoid a phobic object or situation, fear of losing control over your actions, fear of passing out, being aware that you are overreacting, but being unable to do anything about it, your mind may “go blank”.
- You experience physical reactions, as a part of panic attacks, such as pains and aches, gastrointestinal issues, sweating, numb sensation and tingling in your limbs, nausea, increased heartbeat, difficulty breathing.

Glossophobia - Phobic Fear of Public Speaking

Glossophobia - or excessive fear of public speaking - is one of the most common phobias. It's to be a form of social phobia, but people experiencing this phobia aren't necessarily socially phobic.

The word “glossophobia” has its origin in the Greek words *gl?ssa* (meaning tongue) and *phobos* (meaning fear). Another commonly used name for this phobia is speech anxiety.

There are three main aspects of glossophobia:

1. Having the experience of anxiety not just before public speaking, but even when merely thinking about talking in front of a group of people.
2. Undergoing physical distress, feeling of panic, nausea, dizziness and other common psychological and psychological symptoms of anxiety.
3. Having a strong urge to avoid events that revolve around speaking in front a group of people.

The most common symptoms of glossophobia have psychological, verbal and non-verbal forms. The psychological symptoms include the already mentioned dizziness or lightheadedness, nausea, vertigo, increased heart rate,

sweating, weakness in the limbs, sweaty palms, dry mouth, shaky hands, upset stomach and other signs of anxiety.

Verbal Symptoms

The most common verbal symptoms are quivering or having a tense voice, stuttering, and vocalized pauses.

Non-Verbal Symptoms

The non-verbal symptoms include, among others, avoiding eye contact with an audience, wiping hands on clothes, moving restlessly, etc.

Are You Experiencing Glossophobia?

To find out if you are experiencing glossophobia, you can benefit from the brief self-assessment tool below. Note this is not a real psychological or psychiatric assessment tool and thus cannot serve as a substitute for one. Still, it can help you discover whether your fear is phobic or not.

Firstly, take your time, read each question carefully and chose the answer that is true for you. Remember to be as honest as possible.

	QUESTIONS:
1.	Have you ever missed important opportunities in your life (in school, at work, etc.) which involved public speaking?
2.	Have you ever neglected other important moments in your life, because you invested a lot of time and energy in preparing for a speech, due to anxiety?
3.	Do you tend to overthink and imagine all the things that can go wrong before your public speech?
4.	Have you ever tried, unsuccessfully, to overcome your fear of public speaking, but ended up increasing your anxiety?
5.	Do you normally experience any of these symptoms while speaking in front of an audience, or while thinking about speaking: increased heart rate, shaky voice, dry mouth, shaky legs, heavy breathing, physical pain, numbness, and dizziness?

If your answered with “yet” to more than two questions, you may be experiencing glossophobia. But, don’t let that discourage you - phobias are highly treatable, and there are plenty of things you can do about it!

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