



**What  
Are  
You  
Afraid  
Of?**

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## Introduction

What are you afraid of?

Is fear real?

How can people deal with fear?

## Reading

Some people are afraid. They don't always understand why they have these fears but whatever they try to do these phobias still exist.

Becky is one such person.

"I'm afraid of the dark," she says. "I know it sounds silly but I've always been afraid of the dark. Ever since I was a little kid. Even now I sleep with a little light on."

Becky is thirty-two. Her fear of the dark doesn't really cause major problems in her life, but keeping a small light on in the bedroom is not very comfortable for her husband.

"He prefers to sleep with no light on at all," she says. "But I can't do it. I need the security of the light."

Becky is not sure why she has a fear of the dark but she suspects it started when she was a child.

"My older brother would always play tricks on me when I was a little girl. He would pretend to be a ghost and do stupid things to try to scare me."

Another person with a very common fear is Nigel.

"I have arachnophobia," he says. "A fear of spiders." He shrugs

his shoulders. "I've been afraid of spiders all my life."

This causes some embarrassment in Nigel's house as he and his girlfriend live in the countryside.

"In the summer, we get a lot of spiders coming into the house," he says. "But if I see one, I go into a panic. I can barely move. My girlfriend has to pick it up and move it outside."

Nigel knows why he is afraid of spiders.

"My mum is afraid of spiders," he says. "Whenever she saw a spider, she would scream her head off. I watched this as a young boy and it stayed with me for life."

Nigel has tried some methods to get rid of his fear of spiders.

"I've been to see a hypnotherapist," he says. "That didn't work. I had counselling. That failed too. I even tried picking up spiders to test myself but I just could not overcome my fear of them."

One person that does understand where fears come from is Dr Jane Masters.

"The thing that both Becky and Nigel understand about their fears is where they came from," says Dr Masters. "Fears usually start in our childhood and there is often little we can do to change that."

So it looks like fears are with us for life.

“You can overcome it,” says Dr Masters. “You just have to understand that the fear is often irrational and not based on anything real. If you can come to terms with that then you can beat the fear easily.”

By using psychology, people can get over their fears. Sounds easy.

“Well, not always,” says Dr Masters. “I have a fear of needles. And I have never been able to get over it.”

A doctor with a fear of needles.

“I know,” she says. “Every time I see a needle, a shiver goes down my spine.”

## Reading Comprehension Questions

What is Becky afraid of?

What is Nigel afraid of?

What is Jane afraid of?

What does Becky do to combat her fear? What does her husband think of this?

How does Nigel deal with his fear?

How does Becky think she got her fear?

How does Nigel think he got his?

Does Becky have her fear all year round? What about Nigel?

What methods did Nigel try to beat his fear? Were these successful?

According to the doctor, where do our fears usually come from?

Does the doctor think our fears are irrational or irrational?

## Essential Vocabulary

|                     |                             |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| phobias             | silly                       |
| a little kid        | security                    |
| suspects            | play tricks                 |
| pretend             | scare                       |
| arachnophobia       | shrugs his shoulders        |
| causes              | embarrassment               |
| countryside         | panic                       |
| scream her head off | methods                     |
| hypnotherapist      | counselling                 |
| overcome            | childhood                   |
| irrational          | psychology                  |
| needles             | a shiver goes down my spine |



## Exercise

Write down all the words and phrases in your vocabulary notebook. Look in your dictionary and find the meaning of each word. Write the definition next to each word.

Then make up your own sentences using each word or phrase.

For example:

**Notebook**—*a small book with pages of blank paper that students use to make notes when studying.*

***“I left my notebook at home so I was unable to make any notes in my English class.”***

# I Got the Fear!!

Role Play:

**First person** — a doctor

**Second person** — a patient with a very strange fear

In this role play, a patient comes to see a doctor.

The patient has a very strange and irrational fear. It is the task of the doctor to try to convince the patient that their fear is all in their mind. That it is not real at all.

The class should get into pairs and choose one of the following fears below.

All of the following fears are real.

**Anatidaephobia** — the fear that a duck is always watching them no matter where they are or what they are doing.

**Hippopotomonstrosesquipedaliophobia** — the fear of long words! Any time the person sees, hears or tries to write a long word they go into a complete panic.

**Neophobia** — the fear of new things. So for this person, they would have a great fear of any new technology.

**Philophobia** — the fear of falling in love. The person with this

fear avoids other people in case they fall in love and lose control of their own life.

**Ergophobia** — this is the fear of the workplace. In particular, the fear of the office, the boss and colleagues.

**Nomophobia** — this is the fear of having no phone connection. They are afraid of not having any internet connection and being unable to get online on their smartphones.

**Ablutophobia** — people who have this fear are afraid of washing and bathing. They are not afraid of water but deeply afraid of the physical act of washing their body in a shower or a bath.

**Chaetophobia** — people who suffer from this fear are afraid of hair growing on their body.

**Oikophobia** — this is the fear of being inside a house and using items in a house like a sofa or a washing machine.

**Panphobia** — this is the fear of everything!

## Discussion Questions

What are you afraid of? Can you tell the class?

Do you think all fears are irrational? What fears are rational?

Are you less afraid of things now than as a child? Why/why not?

Who is more likely to have fears? Boy or girls? Men or women? Why?

What kind of fears can interfere with the quality of a person's life?

What are the physical side effects if someone is afraid?

Can someone overcome their fears? How?

Are you afraid of speaking English? Why/why not?

If you are afraid of speaking English, how can you overcome this fear?

What is your biggest fear for all the world?

What is your biggest fear for the future of the human race?

“There is nothing to fear, but fear itself” — Do you agree or disagree with this quote?

## Writing

Write a letter to yourself about your secret fears.

As you write, try to examine why you are afraid of these things.

Keep asking yourself questions to come to the real reason why you have these fears.

## Credits

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