



## Understanding Common Phobias

We are all afraid from time to time. Most of the time our fears have a basis in reality, such as when we feel afraid walking down a dark alley alone at night. We know from our own experience and the experience of others that we are jeopardizing our safety and so it seems reasonable to be afraid. Read these tips to learn the differences between fears and phobias, and how phobias can be treated.

### Mild Fears

Many of us experience mild and perhaps slightly irrational fears as well, such as the fear of flying in an airplane or riding in an elevator. Most of us will fly in an airplane and ride in elevators in spite of our fear because we know that, as a practical matter, we can overcome it in the face of necessity. These fears do not interfere with our daily lives. In fact, we are often able to laugh about them even though they make us slightly uncomfortable.

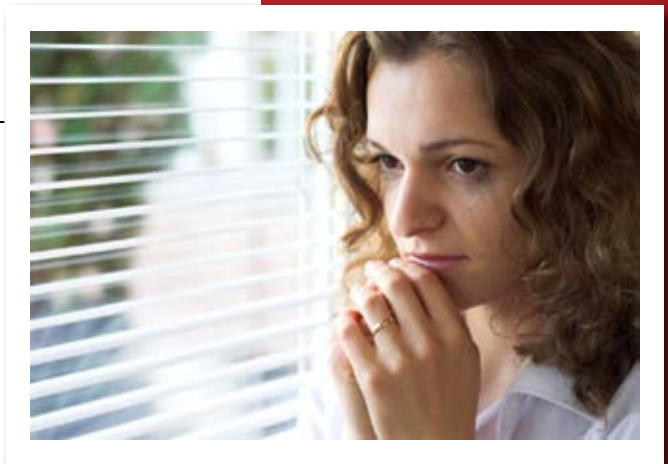
### A Simple Phobia

A phobia is an irrational need to avoid situations or objects. A "simple phobia" might be the complete avoidance of flying in an airplane or riding in an elevator, even though that avoidance is impractical.

### Overcoming a Simple Phobia

Simple phobias can be relatively easy to overcome with a three-pronged approach:

- Behavior therapy, which teaches us small steps to change the way we think about the activity
- Education, such as discussion sessions with airline pilots and aircraft engineers, to address our irrational fears about the activity
- Group support, to help us realize that we are not alone in our fears



For more information or support about phobias, contact the work/life experts at BalanceWorks® by calling:

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## **A Serious Phobia**

A more serious phobia, however, is a fear so powerful it might prevent us from going about the normal activities of everyday life. It has a component of all-encompassing fear which fills us with an almost constant feeling of dread.

## **Overcoming a Serious Phobia**

Serious phobias can usually be treated successfully by a mental health professional with behavior modification, medication or both. Successful intervention can help phobia sufferers become more realistic about their fears so that they can return to a full life.

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