

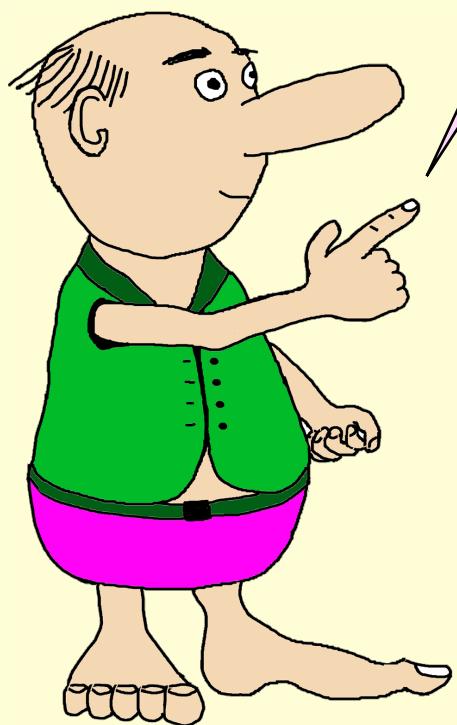
“DEAR DICK” - FEAR & ANXIETY

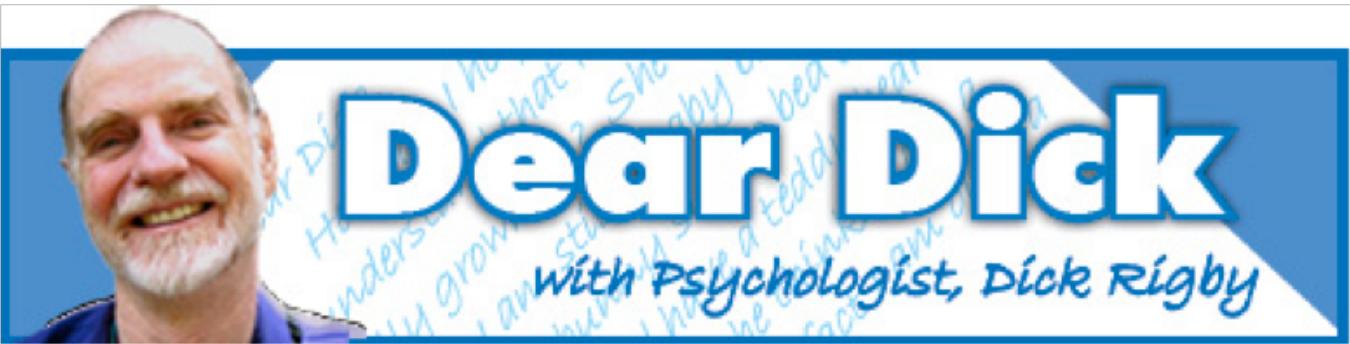
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Chapter 1. Anxiety





"Anxiety lowers your IQ"

April 2005

"That was so dumb. I can't believe you did it". Peter said to his good friend Lucy. "I just panicked. I lost the plot", Lucy replied. It's not the first time that Lucy panicked in a difficult situation and made the wrong move.

When we panic, we lose some of our ability to make rational decisions. Panic is a version of the "flight or fight response" where our bodies gear up to deal with a serious crisis. When the flight or fight response works well, it can be very helpful in providing the physical strength and focus to deal with an emergency.

But a panic attack is where something goes wrong. The body goes into emergency fear response without a good reason. A person can shake, perspire and feel as if they really are in danger. Often a panic attack goes unreported because the person feels too embarrassed. Lucy used the toilets at a large shopping complex. When she went to exit the cubicle, the lock wouldn't work. She felt trapped and claustrophobic. She panicked and started banging on the closed door and yelling for someone to let her out.

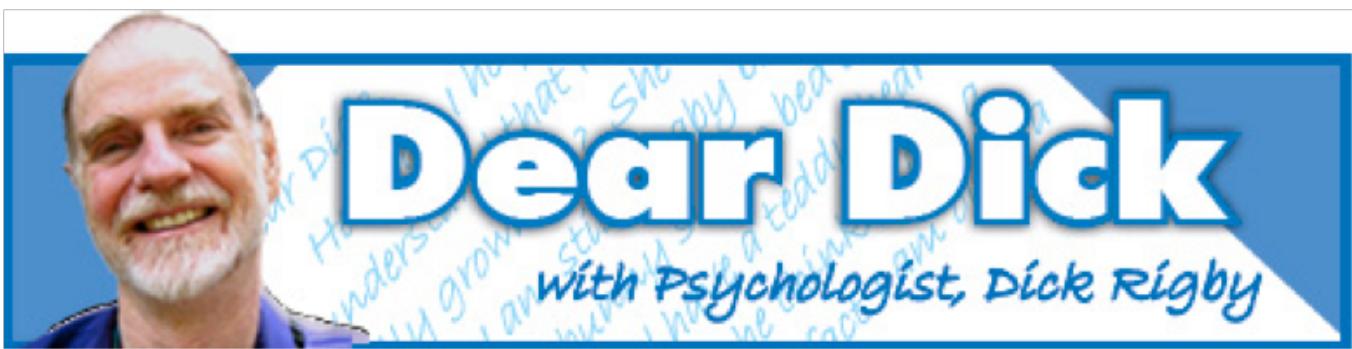
Help came, but it took 20 minutes for her to be let out. Someone pointed out that the lock just needed a bit of a firm twist to open it. This didn't help how Lucy was feeling. Humiliation added to embarrassment which added to trauma.

She was so embarrassed that she didn't tell anyone for a week. Peter's response didn't help either. Technically, Peter was right, Lucy's response was "dumb". It's true; anxiety does lower your IQ at the time.

That was the last straw for Lucy, she decided to get help. She visited a psychologist, Anne. Anne taught Lucy how to manage her panic attack. Lucy learned how to find out what beliefs were behind the attack. A most important step, because if you don't know what your subconscious part is saying about the danger you are in, then you can't communicate with this part.

To her surprise, Lucy found out that this part had been saying, that she would be trapped in the toilet for a long time and something very dangerous was about to happen.

Anne gave Lucy the tools to communicate with this part and reassure it that it was not in any danger at all. There was a protocol to go through on these occasions. It worked. Lucy has been in similar claustrophobic situations since then and she has dealt with them with her IQ intact.



“Anxiety and how to beat it”

September 2001

Anxiety, worry, apprehension, nerves, and so on. They all come down to one word. Fear. Fear rules many people's lives. Fear can stop them from living life to the full.

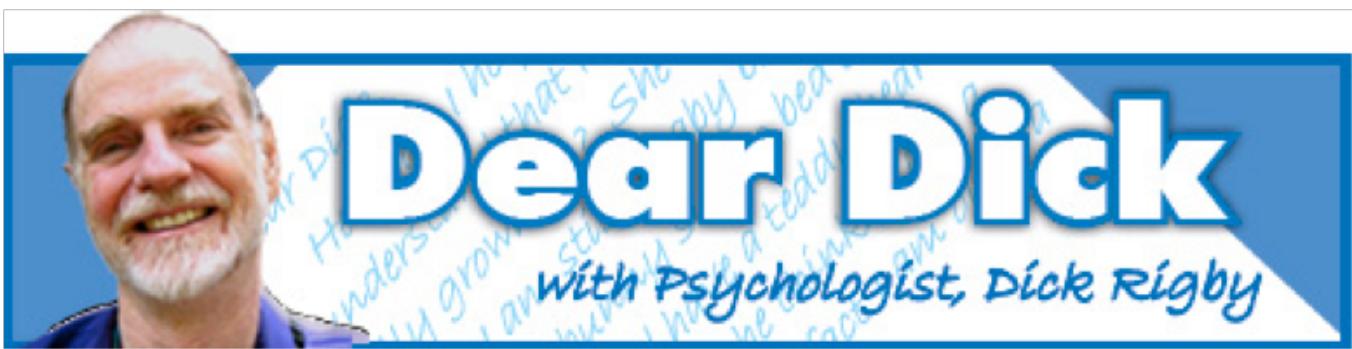
We need some fear otherwise we would take unreasonable risks. Reasonable fear is healthy. But a fear that is out of control creates problems for people. You know that fear is out of control when you are frightened of something, yet, at the same time, know that something is not dangerous. This is often called a phobia. A phobia is, by definition an unreasonable fear.

Amanda was frightened of being in a crowded shopping centre. She would become very distressed. She would start to have a panic attack and have to leave immediately. She knew that her fear was unreasonable, because she was not in any danger. She just felt that she was. Amanda has a subconscious part in charge of this fear. This part is an intelligent subsystem within her. We all have them. This part believes that the shopping centre is dangerous and acts accordingly to protect Amanda.

To fix the problem, Amanda must learn how to communicate with this subconscious part. There are lots of techniques that help do this. Techniques such as “Voice dialogue”, “Gestalt therapy”, and “NLP”. When I work with someone like Amanda, my starting point is to get her to appreciate that this subconscious part is trying to look after her. Once she believes this, she can thank the part for doing it’s best.

It sounds strange, but it really does work. Unless one makes a connection with this part, nothing changes. Establishing trust and dialogue between the conscious mind and a troublesome subconscious part is the best way that I know to overcome an unreasonable fear. Using voice dialogue, we can learn what that part is really afraid of. Sometimes it isn't the obvious. Once we have that information, we can better reassure that part that it is safe.

It turned out that Amanda's subconscious part was afraid that she would get lost in the shopping centre and not be able to find a toilet when she urgently needed one. With this knowledge, Amanda was able to plan her visits to the local shopping centre better so that she made herself aware of where all the toilets were before she went shopping.



“Don’t be afraid”

October 2002

"Don't be afraid of those things that are not dangerous!" A good motto for life, but so hard for some people to live by. Claire had a fear of frogs. Not just a fear. She was terrified. In her adult mind, she knew that a green frog couldn't harm her, but she couldn't shake her overwhelming fear.

How could this be? Well it's all in the way that we learn how to be frightened. Claire learned her fear of frogs in primary school when a couple of older boys teased her with a frog. They held the frog against her face and she couldn't get away. She was terrified.

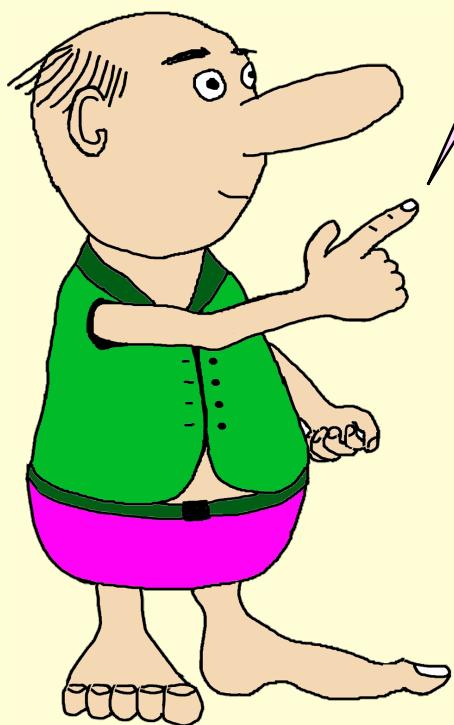
Our brain lays down the memory of such events using the limbic system. The limbic system sits in the centre of the brain. Ordinary rational discussion doesn't seem to reach this part. So Claire could reason with herself 'till the cows came home, but she just couldn't get rid of the fear.

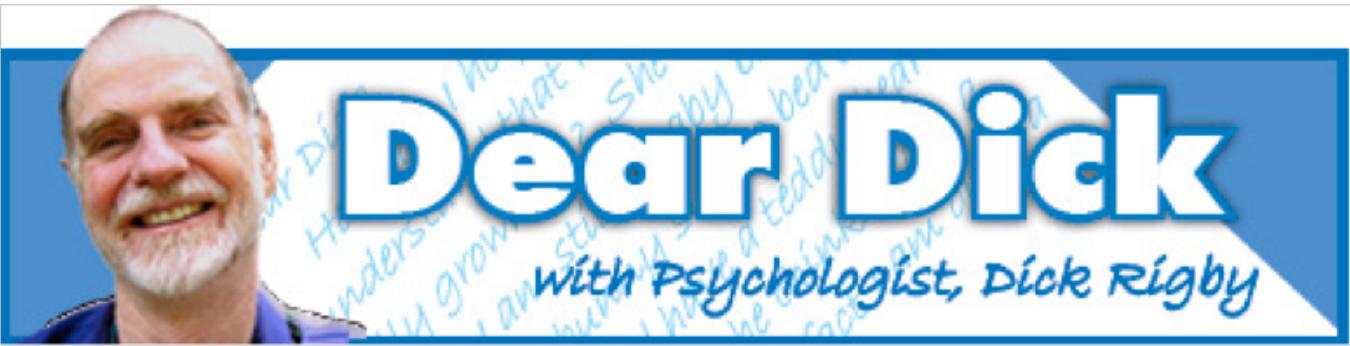
Different techniques have to be used to overcome this sort of fear or phobia. These techniques involve making emotional connection by way of the limbic system. One technique that I have talked before is "Systematic desensitization". This worked for Claire using a model of a frog to help make it realistic. After a couple of sessions, she was able to touch a real frog without any fear at all. Too easy. If people really want to put in the effort, they can learn to overcome fear of things that are not dangerous.

As part of my practice I help people overcome a fear of singing or public speaking. Larry was absolutely petrified of singing in front of other people. He was terrified to sing even in front of his trusted friends. He knew his friends were supportive and would not rubbish him. I was able to help him retrain the limbic system to know that he was safe to sing in front of these people. Eventually he got the confidence to do this. He now enjoys singing in a choir. Larry learned that, even if people were to rubbish him, he is still not in any real danger.

Many of us have unreasonable fears that prevent us doing what we want to do. For me, it is always a great pleasure to see someone let go of unfounded fears that have been cluttering their lives for years.

Chapter 2. Panic attacks





"Panic attacks"

March 2000

I am 24 years old and I have a good job. Nearly every morning when I am getting ready to go to work, I get really frightened and start shaking. My doctor tells me that this is a panic attack. He has given me some pills for it and they help, but when I take them I feel dull in my head for the rest of the morning. Is there a better way of managing these feelings?

Shelly

Dear Shelly

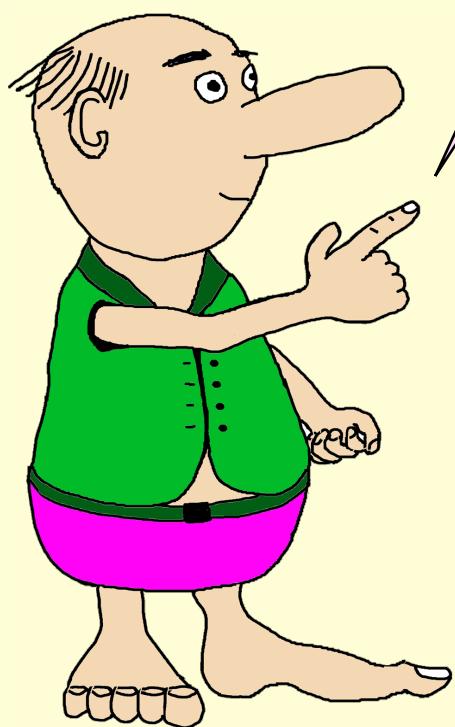
Yes Shelly, there is a better way of managing panic attacks than just using medication. Panic attacks (also known as anxiety attacks) are surprisingly common. They usually take the form that a person starts to feel feelings of dread and foreboding in a particular situation. Often the person is not sure what is causing the fear. In other cases, the cause is known. For example a client of mine would have a panic attack in a crowded shopping centre. She would feel trapped and feel that something dreadful was about to happen.

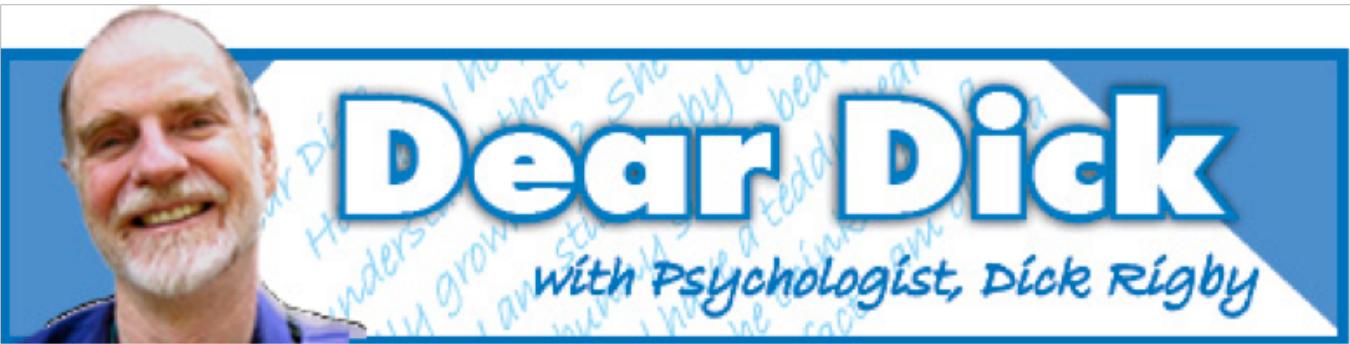
Medication, such as Valium can help under certain circumstances, but medication doesn't do anything to cure the condition. There are techniques that you can learn that will help you regain control. When I treat people suffering from panic attacks, I use a combination of two methods. The first is the control of breathing and the second is self comforting. When you have a panic attack, you will hyperventilate (take in too much air). This results in a reduction of the amount of carbon dioxide in the lungs and bloodstream. This increases the feelings of fear.

When you feel a panic attack starting, breath slowly and take shallow breaths. Breath from the diaphragm (tummy) not the chest. Maintain this slow shallow breathing for at least 5 minutes and preferably 10 minutes.

The second technique is talking to yourself in a reassuring way. It may help to visualize yourself as a young child. You (the adult) reassure this child that it is safe and nothing bad is going to happen. This technique is only to be used where you are sure that there is no real danger. These techniques work, but they are not easy to do. It takes practice and perseverance to unlearn the habit of a panic attack.

Chapter 3. Phobias





“Spider phobia ”
November 1998

My daughter Jill is 19 years old. She is terrified of spiders and has been afraid of spiders for at least 8 years. Jill doesn't want help with her problem because she believes, that if she overcomes her fear of spiders she would have to come close to them. The thought of this terrifies her.

Sometimes her fear is so great that she can't enter a room, if she believes that there is a big spider there. Our house is surrounded by bush and sometimes spiders come into the house. We are against spraying around the house. What should we do - how can we help Jill?

Mrs O

Dear Mrs O

Phobias such as that of spiders (arachnophobia) can be so overpowering that they can severely limit what a person can do in their life. Usually, phobias are reasonably easy to cure. The catch is getting the phobic person prepared to have the phobia cured. Sometimes their fear is so great that they don't want the phobia cured. If I were to say to Jill, “We can have your phobia of spiders cured and you will be able to walk in the garden with confidence”. Jill might say to herself, “If that were to happen, I would walk in the garden and then be attacked by a spider”. The paradox here is that Jill imagines herself in the cured state while at the same time still being terrified of spiders. She is unable to imagine the non-terrified state.

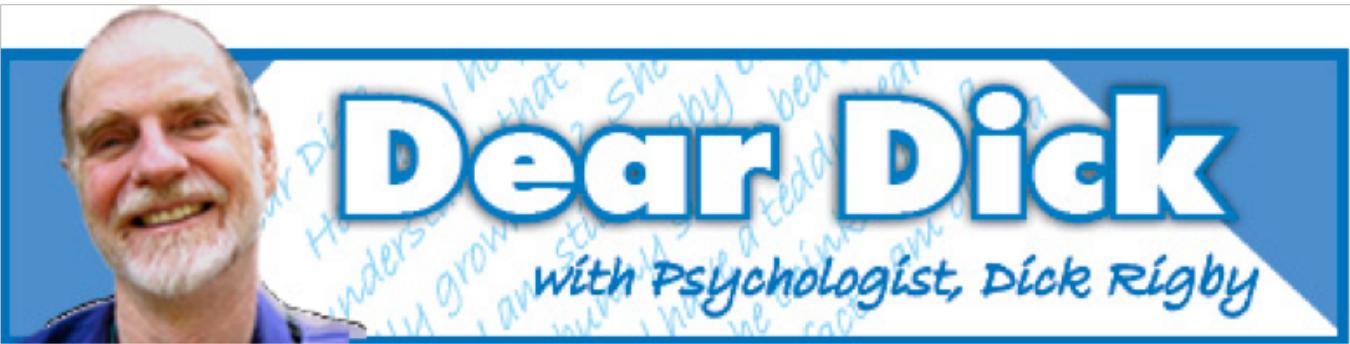
There are several different techniques for overcoming phobias. Among these are:- Systematic desensitization NLP, Flooding and Voice dialogue. I won't go into these in detail, but they all work on the principle of getting through to the frightened subconscious part that, what they are afraid of is not as dangerous as it seems to be.

Most of these techniques are effective using only a person's imagination and never having to deal with a real spider. Usually the person doesn't feel frightened during the therapy.

The aim of overcoming a phobia is to bring the fear in line with reality. A person overcoming a fear of frogs could become totally fearless and all would be well. But if a person were to be cured of a phobia of dangerous critters such as spiders or snakes, they should retain some fear (or respect) because some of them are dangerous.

The aim with Jill would be to reduce her terror of spiders to a mild fear or respect. Then she could then walk past a spider's web in the garden and feel ok.

People often grow out of phobias, but therapy is much more efficient and usually painless.



"The fear of singing "

August 1999

More and more people with voice problems have been coming to see me in recent times. The most common problem that I come across is the fear of singing or speaking in public. Over the years, I have treated many people with an overwhelming fear of singing. For some people, it can even be described as a "terror". Their terror is far out of proportion to anything bad that might actually happen by singing in front of others. Just the thought of singing in front of people reduces them to a bundle of nerves. The same sort of fear applies to public speaking for other people.

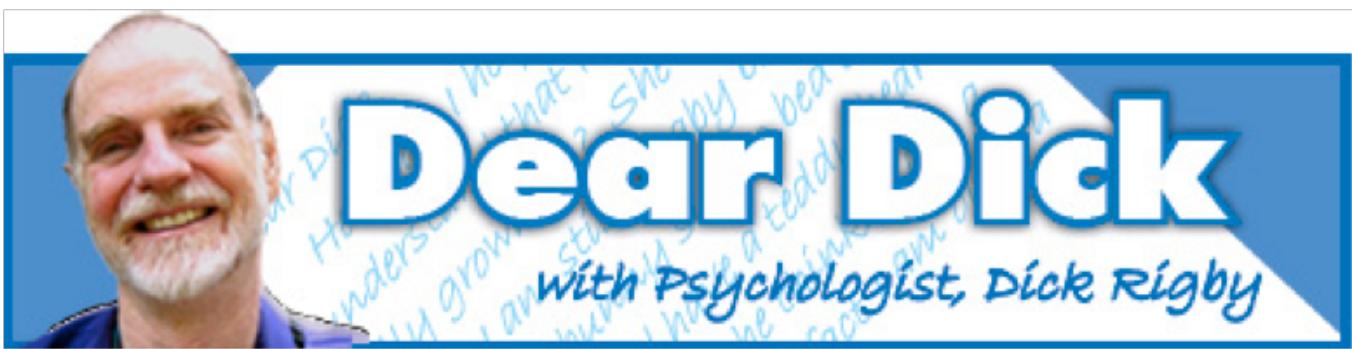
Usually the fear of singing is learned in childhood. It may have come from a bad experience at school or at home. After such a bad experience, the child makes the decision that to sing in front of other people is to risk humiliation. Often, the memory of the humiliating event is locked in the subconscious mind and carries through into adult life. Even though we may no longer be consciously aware of the event that caused the fear to develop, that fear still controls whether we sing or not.

Mary had such a terror of singing when she first came to see me. She had a pleasant voice and loved to sing, but she had to make absolutely sure that nobody else could hear her. I helped her to learn to communicate better with the subconscious system that held this fear of singing. After several sessions, she was able to reassure the fearful part and take a more realistic view of the risks of her singing in front of people.

As a result of the therapy, Mary was able to improve her confidence in her voice significantly. Not only was she able to be more confident by making a realistic assessment of the risks of singing in front of other people, but she was also able to improve the quality and power of her voice once her level of fear was reduced.

Mary is now a member of a local choir and singing is one of the passions of her life. She is still nervous and if she has to sing a solo she can now handle it ok.

At the end of last year, I published my book titled "Holistic Singing and Toning - Using voice power for healing and enjoyment". I wrote this book to help people with practical ways to overcome unrealistic performance fears. The book also deals with how to get the best from your voice. The book is available from the Kenmore Book Exchange and other book shops.



“Fear of snakes” September 2000

My husband and I have just moved onto acreage at Brookfield. I am terrified of snakes and I have been all my life. As the weather warms up, I don't know how I am going to cope. I can't walk around the property without being really scared and wary all the time.

I would like to be able to walk around the property and enjoy nature without being frightened. What can be done?

Mrs L

Dear Mrs L

There's good news and good news. Your fear of snakes can be lowered to a reasonable level so that you can enjoy walking around your property.

Your fear of snakes could be called a phobia. A phobia is a fear that is out of control. It is right and proper to have some fear of snakes, because some snakes are dangerous. But when that fear becomes unreasonable and you are not able to control it, then it can be called a phobia. Often phobias are set up by a single traumatic experience. They are learned behaviours. Therefore, they can be unlearned.

When I help a person recover from a phobia, there are two questions that I ask. The first is; Do you know that your fear is unreasonable? The second is: Do you really want to overcome this fear? If the answer to both these questions is a resounding yes, then the phobia is usually easy to fix.

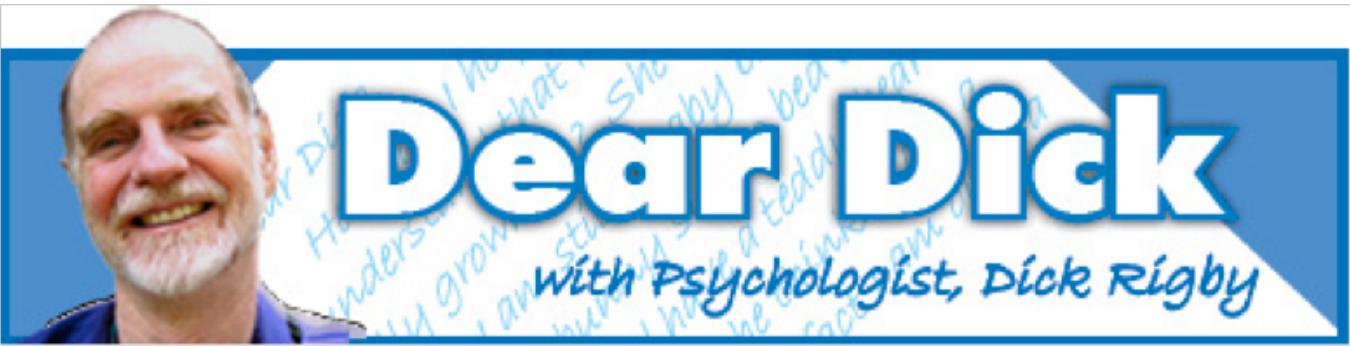
With snakes, the question is, "How frightened should I be?" There are dangerous snakes in the Brookfield area, but they are not generally aggressive and reasonable care can keep you out of danger. By reasonable care, I mean keeping on the lookout if you are walking in an area where a snake may be hiding.

When helping to fix phobias, I use several techniques such as "Systematic Desensitization" and "The Swish Technique". Both these techniques are user friendly and don't involve a person becoming frightened. The Swish Technique is done using your imagination. Unfortunately, neither of these techniques lend themselves to self help. They work much better if someone is guiding you through.

One of the messages that may go through your mind is, "If I overcome this fear then I will become too foolhardy and, and then I might be attacked by a snake". Not so. When you overcome such a phobia, you can still be wary and careful around snakes, but the compulsive part of the fear is gone. You fix the "I know this is ridiculous, but I just can't seem to stop it".

Chapter 4. Fear





“Running from fear”

December 2006

WARNING: Readers should be warned that this story does not have a happy ending.

Josh (not his real name) had a happy life, or so he said. His wife Jannette was not happy because she had to deal with Josh's chronic anxiety and depression.

He came to see me at Jannette's insistence. She brought him because she was at the end of her tether. She was sick of making excuses. Sometimes he was so anxious that he couldn't even go to work. She would ring up his boss and make some excuse.

Eventually his boss fired him. Josh had been out of work for 3 months before he saw me and Jannette was having to work extra shifts just to keep enough money coming in.

He was such a nice man when I met him. He was so pleasant and cooperative. He genuinely wanted my help to fix his anxiety. So far so good.

The first session went well. I had some suggestions about anxiety management and he was more than willing to give these a go. He and Jannette left the session feeling optimistic.

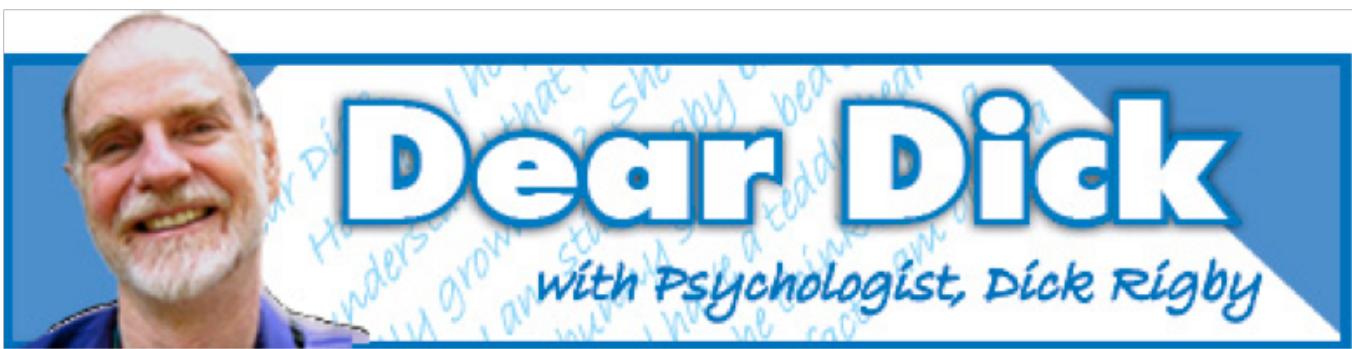
His anxiety had improved by the second session and he had done some job hunting. We did more on anxiety reduction and coping strategies. We talked about his family of origin and how his mother had been such a worrier. We talked about his father's suicide when he was just 11 years old.

He understood how he learned to be frightened and how things that he loved would be snatched away from him.

By the third session he had started getting anxiety attacks again and he felt more pessimistic. He appeared to have closed down. He said that he was just going through a bad patch and he would be fine.

He didn't keep his fourth appointment. When I rang him to find out what had happened, he said that he had forgotten and he would ring me to make another appointment. That call never came.

At some deep level it just became too scary. He chose the easy way out which was to retreat back into his fear. If he had kept coming, Josh would have broken through the fear barrier. So sad because he had so much potential.



“Fear and danger”

May 2009

I see many people suffering from anxiety. In fact it's the most common condition that I treat. Anxiety is chronic (ongoing) fear that is much higher than it should be.

Let me explain. George was afraid of going into a crowded supermarket. Sometimes he would have a panic attack. Very unpleasant. He avoided crowded places. I asked George to rate the fear that he experienced in the supermarket on a 10 point scale. He rated it as a 9/10.

Then I asked him to rate the danger he was facing in terms of something harmful happening to him such as being bumped by a shopping trolley or knocked by a running child.

He took some time to think about this and came up with a danger rating of 1/10. I then asked him to subtract the danger score from the fear score. This was his “phobic factor”. It was 8/10. That was our starting point.

The aim of our therapy was to bring the fear score in line with the danger score. This kind of fear is often deep seated and hard to change. Sometimes the sufferer is not even aware of what causes the fear. We did a lot of exploring of the hidden beliefs that drove his fear. The hidden beliefs are those held by the “Frightened Child”.

As we explored, we learned that it was a fear of being trapped. The “Frightened Child” feared that if George needed to get out in a hurry, he would not be able to find an exit, or the crowds would prevent him making his escape.

We did some Emotional Freedom tapping and reduced the fear level from a 9/10 to a 5/10. The next step was for George to test himself out in the real situation. I got him to use "Systematic Desensitization". He would approach the shopping centre, but go no closer than to have a fear rating of 3/10. When it got to a 3, he would retreat, do some reassurance of the Frightened Child, do some more tapping, and then approach again.

Each time he tried, he became more confident, until he was able to stand in the middle on the shopping centre feeling totally in control. How good is that?

George was very pleased. But this was not the only annoying fear in his life. We started the process of working through other fears, including the fear of flying. George is making good progress in curing his unwanted fears.