

Appendix 11 Management plan for specific phobias

Management strategies will always vary from one individual to the next depending on the individual's particular problems. Generally, however, the management of specific phobias usually involves:

1. Ongoing assessment of the disorder. For example, ask the individual whether or not he or she still avoids the feared situation, and obtain his or her subjective rating of anxiety when in the feared situation (scored out of 10 where 0 is no anxiety and 10 is maximum anxiety).
2. Education about the nature of anxiety, tailored to each individual's needs.
3. Providing training in strategies to control anxiety symptoms, and encouraging the individual to practise these techniques regularly.
 - Breathing control- the slow breathing exercise in Appendix 6
 - Relaxation training in Appendix 8
4. Graded exposure to feared situations. For example, if an individual is afraid of snakes, the following hierarchy could be arranged depending on how fearful the individual finds each step:
 - looking at pictures of snakes
 - touching pictures of snakes
 - looking at snakes in the zoo
 - touching a fake snake
 - touching a snake through a sheet of glass (i.e. hand on one side of the glass and the snake on the other side) if a snake is available
 - imagining how it would feel to touch a snake (scaly skin, cool, firm, etc.)
 - touching a snake (if a snake is available).
5. Individuals are to be encouraged to avoid using sedative medication to cope with the feared situations
6. Individuals with a blood/injury phobia who faint may require additional intervention
7. Referral or specialist consultation if avoidance of the feared situation persists despite the above measures.

(Treatment Protocol Project 1997)