

Phobia treatment  
c/o www.epsychvcw.com

Biological

Benzodiazepines

Benzo's are GABA agonists

They mimic the effects of GABA at postsynaptic receptors - thus having an inhibitory effect

Thus providing a calming effect on the nervous system, particularly when there is direct/potential exposure to a phobic stimulus

Breathing retraining

Overbreathing is a common effect of a fight-flight response when exposed to a phobic stimulus resulting in imbalance of oxygen and carbon dioxide levels which can trigger dizziness & light headedness and thus can perpetuate a phobic disorder

Breathing retraining helps the patient regulate their breathing patterns when they are exposed to a phobic stimulus and thus over time confidence in regulating their response to a phobic stimulus to a more adaptive level

Exercise

Exercise is an effective means of flushing out excess hormones that have been released via a FFF response when exposed to a phobic stimulus as well as releasing endorphins which combine to provide a sense of wellbeing.

Psychological

CBT

Cognitive component: starts by assisting the patient to identify the triggers of a phobic response and then to help them change their thoughts and feelings about their phobic stimulus

Behavioural component: the patient is then encouraged to modify their behaviour i.e. Reducing avoidance of day-to-day activities.

Systematic desensitisation

Uses the principles of classical conditioning to extinguish a phobia via a 3-step process

Step 1: learn a relaxation strategy that can be used to reduce the effects of a stress response e.g. Breathing retraining

Step 2: create a fear hierarchy based on approximations of the CS (the fear evoking stimulus)

Step 3: combine steps 1 & 2 by starting at the bottom of the hierarchy and maintain exposure until the CR (fear response) is reduced to an adaptive level and then move up to the next level of the hierarchy until eventually exposure to the CS no longer triggers a CR - thus extinction has occurred.

Social

Psychoeducation

Educates both the patient and their family/supporters about the processes required for the patients recovery - specifically

Not encouraging avoidance of activities/situations that involve potential exposure to their phobic stimulus

Challenging unrealistic thoughts