

Claustrophobia Printable Reading Comprehension

Name _____

Everybody experiences fear sometimes. You might experience fear before you get a shot at the doctor's office, or, before you give a speech to a crowd of people. Phobias, however, are irrational fears of objects or situations. Such fears can be so serious that they disrupt the lives of those who suffer from them. The most common phobias are those of heights (acrophobia), social situations (agoraphobia), and small spaces (claustrophobia). Some people have phobias of specific animals such as spiders or snakes, or any other kind of animal. Phobias are thought to affect between six and eight percent of all people.

One of the most common phobias is called claustrophobia. Claustrophobia is the extreme fear of being in small, enclosed spaces, or, being trapped. Those who suffer from claustrophobia report elevators, small cars, airplanes, tunnels, crowded rooms, and even tight-fitting clothes can trigger strong fear responses. Sometimes, the fear becomes so overwhelming, that those with claustrophobia believe they are suffocating and experience panic attacks.

Most psychologists believe claustrophobia is caused by past, traumatic experiences such as being locked in a dark room or closet, falling into a pool and not being able to swim to safety, or, being separated from parents in a large crowd. Another theory posits that claustrophobia, and other phobias, are caused by the dysfunction of part of the brain called the amygdala. Children who grew up with a claustrophobic parent are more likely to develop it themselves.

Claustrophobia is usually treated by psychologists who use behavioral therapies. One therapy is called "exposure theory." In exposure therapy, a patient is put in a safe environment where he or she confronts the fear and learns strategies to overcome the fear.

1. Phobias affect...

- A. a large portion of the population.
- B. everyone.
- C. only people who are afraid of a lot of things.
- D. a small portion of the population.

2. A fear of sharks...

- A. is not real.
- B. is not of the most common phobias.
- C. is one of the most common phobias.
- D. is not serious.

3. Which of the following situations could trigger a fear response from someone who suffers from claustrophobia?

- A. Being high up on a building
- B. Seeing spider webs
- C. Being on an underground subway car
- D. Running a race on an outdoor track

4. Which of the following situations could trigger a fear response from someone who suffers from agoraphobia?

- A. Taking an elevator to the 29th floor
- B. Being in a small room when the power goes out
- C. Being at a party with unfamiliar people
- D. Seeing an animal such as a snake or spider

5. Read the sentence below in which the word “affect” is used. Which of the sentences uses the word “affect” incorrectly?

Phobias are thought to affect between six and eight percent of all people.

- A. Does sleeping for six hours affect concentration?
- B. What is the affect of drinking three cups of coffee on energy levels?
- C. Poor sleeping habits affect 40% of the population
- D. How will your poor test scores affect your grade?

6. What would be an example of “exposure therapy?”

- A. Finding strategies for someone with agoraphobia
- B. Giving proper medicines to someone with acrophobia
- C. Addressing fears with a person suffering from claustrophobia in an elevator
- D. Engaging in discussions with people suffering from different phobias

7. Read the sentence below in which the word “irrational” is used. What could be a synonym for the antonym of “irrational?”

Phobias, however, are irrational fears of objects or situations.

- A. grateful
- B. confusing
- C. silent
- D. expected