

Sensory Delights

Get Real

by

Brooke Bessesen



Facing the frightful facts: fighting fears leads to freedom

Experts tell us fear is our greatest personal enemy.

Of course, they're not talking about the kind of trepidation that keeps us from frolicking on busy train tracks or laughing with milk in our mouth. That's good common sense.

They mean **False Evidence Appearing Real** – irrational fears that can get us in a choke-hold, trap our minds in a state of worry and stop us from enjoying certain aspects of life.

On some level, we all grapple with fear. So, what are we afraid of? Everything, apparently.

Literally hundreds of phobias haunt us. Several are so widespread, even my computer spell check recognizes them, including agoraphobia (fear of jeopardy in public places), claustrophobia (fear of being tied up and kept in a refrigerator box), and aerophobia (fear of flying, er, more accurately ... crashing into the ground at 437mph).

Maybe you didn't know the psychiatric terms, but most of us struggle with kakorrhaphiophobia: fear of failure, and the second most common fear, sociophobia: fear of being negatively judged in social situations, which is what keeps us from double-dipping.

Perhaps you can relate to glossophobics who feel panicked by public speaking. But can you imagine being paralyzed by the color yellow? If you had xanthophobia you could. And I always thought yellow was so cheery.

Being terrified of long words is hippopotomonstrosesquippedaliophobia, a 36-letter mega mot. Now that's just cruel. Even the Slim Fast version is a mouthful. Sesquipedalophobia.

If you assume normal people don't suffer strange anxieties you should know necrophobia (fear of death) falls at number 10, three surprising steps below the perils of vomiting (emetophobia).

Given the choice between throwing up and facing a firing

squad, I suspect I'd somehow find the courage to barf. But that's just me.

Animals cope with dread, too; some pooches wrestle brontophobia, (fear of thunderstorms) or monophobia (fear of being left alone). Proof that mental turbulence doesn't discriminate by brain shape.

I am not a worry wart. Thankfully my Grandmother's proclivity to fret dropped off the family tree like a bad apple. I am strong, unflappable and willing to face what the world has to offer.

Except ... I'm scared of dolls. I manage well enough in the day-to-day but have to carefully avoid little girls' bedrooms and, well, Heritage Fairs.

Turns out, I'm not alone. Others also perceive that eerie look on the American Girls' faces. Yes, while pediophobia doesn't rank in the top 10, it is a fairly common disorder. Some mental health professionals even specialize in it. I repeat ... some doctors make a living treating people who are afraid of dolls. Now *that's* scary!

OK, I'm also afraid of Under The Bed, but just at night. I never leave an arm or leg lingering vulnerably over the edge and, approaching in the dark, I am occasionally troubled by thoughts of the Boogeyman grabbing my ankle. (I've heard the suggestion he's fictitious, but one can never be too cautious when it comes to The Living Dead taking up residence at foot level.)

Once, after accidentally watching a late-night Chucky film trailer while channel surfing, I leapt onto my mattress from such an astonishing distance as to put Mike Powell to shame.

Some fears are learned, modeled by parents or brought on by traumatic experience, while others seem to be congenital, ballooning with time. Either way, it is not the catalysts (the thunderstorms, airplanes, dolls, locations, judgments or monsters), but our own terror that threatens to strangle us.

The only thing to fear is fear itself, so to speak. In his 1933 Inaugural Address, FDR might have offered, "The only valid phobia is phobophobia," but, admittedly, it doesn't have the same ring.

Fortunately mental demons can be overcome.

For years I was arachnophobic (being terrified by spiders is, by the way, the most common phobia). So I did the only reasonable thing – I bought a pet tarantula.

I also had a fear of heights (acrophobia). Again, I took action – I went skydiving.

Both times my effort paid off. I like spiders now and no longer whimper at the edge of the Grand Canyon. The psychological freedom is refreshing.

We may never fully escape the carnivorous clutches of fear but if we don't battle the restraints they impose, we are surely destined to a life of unnecessary compromise.

So are the experts right? Is fear our most profound opponent? Are we fated to fight our very minds for the sake of happiness?

I'm afraid so.

Scottsdale resident Brooke Bessesen is the author and illustrator of the children's book Look Who Lives in the Desert!, a humorous-but-educational look at desert wildlife. It's available at all book retailers, including Gridleys of Fountain Hills.

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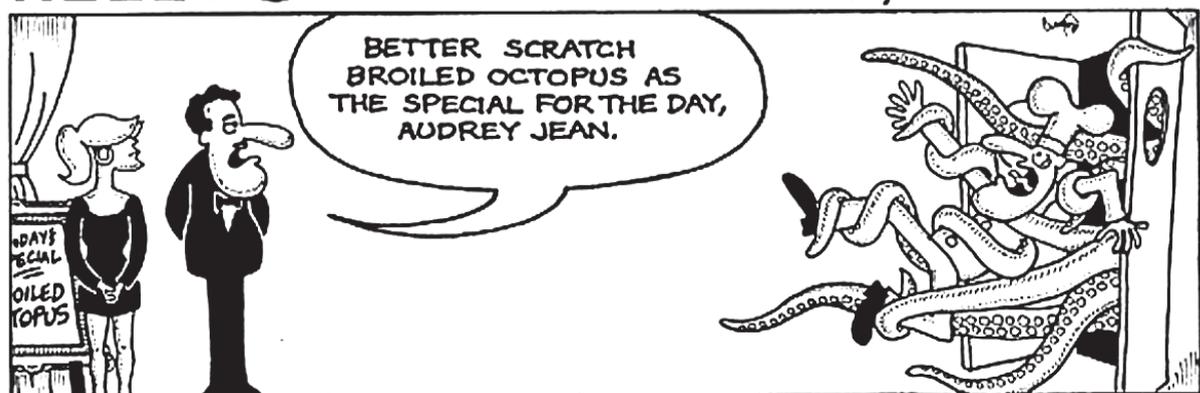
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NEELY'S DINER

by Crawford



The Web

With approximately six billion humans on the planet, the possibility exists for at least that many phobias.

And while UnusualPhobias.com doesn't have them all catalogued, the site has an impressive list of things that frighten folks.

The site invites visitors to submit a phobia. So far, the list

is strange and entertaining.

Such as, one visitor listed a real fear of traveling back in time, becoming stranded and contracting a deadly disease, which, though curable today, wasn't back then.

Another visitor fears peacocks will drag him into a lake and drown him.

Scary, huh?