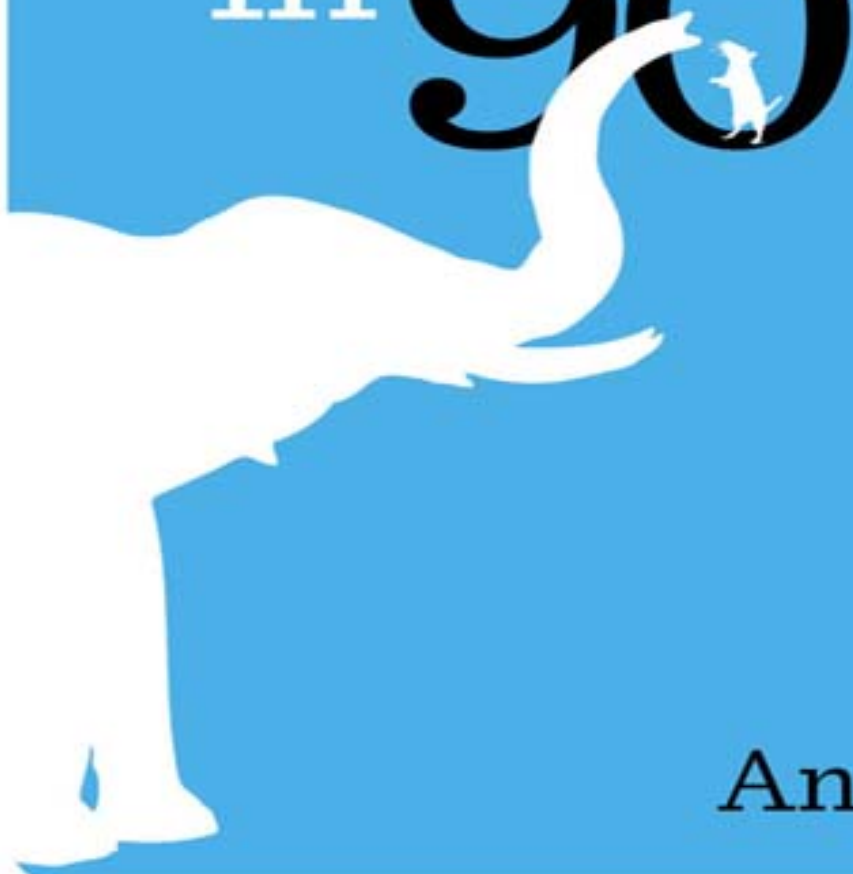


Fix your  
phobia  
in 90 minutes



Anthony Gunn

# Contents

Cover

About the Book

About the Author

Title Page

Dedication

Introduction

1. You're not weird!
2. Phobias are learned
3. The power of emotion
4. Up close and personal
5. Build your mind fitness
6. Label your thoughts
7. Recruit a phobia friend
8. Surf your panic
9. Small steps
10. Victory!

Acknowledgements

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# About the Book

Free yourself from your phobia in 90 minutes

Psychologist and phobias expert Anthony Gunn has spent a lifetime helping people overcome their phobias and has developed a 90-minute treatment that anyone can do. This practical guide will help you fix your phobia quickly and easily in 10 simple steps, and give you the confidence and skills to tackle other challenges in your life. Take charge now!

Anthony Gunn is a psychologist specialising in treating anxiety and phobias. He developed his 10-step method after curing himself of his own chronic phobia of medical procedures.

'I'd been terrified of rats and mice my whole life. But after working with Anthony for just half an hour, I was cured of my phobia to the point where I could even pick up a dead rat. Anthony is my hero!'-Jennifer

## About the Author

**Anthony Gunn** is a psychologist whose personal experience with phobias began when he underwent emergency surgery without anaesthetic in Honduras. The experience left him with a debilitating fear of medical procedures, but through his training he overcame his own phobia and now helps others deal with theirs. He gives regular talks and radio interviews about phobias, and has written articles for magazines. For more information go to [fearispower.com.au](http://fearispower.com.au)

Readers with a heart or other medical condition must obtain their own professional medical advice before undertaking the exposure described in this book. Neither the author nor the publisher may be held responsible for any action or claim howsoever resulting from the use of this book or any information contained in it.

Fix your  
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Vermilion  
LONDON

*To my loving parents, Ron and Helen Gunn,  
who taught me to believe in myself.*

# Introduction

If you've bought this book to overcome a phobia, rest assured that you are in good company. Phobias can affect anyone, regardless of their income, social status or intelligence. It's been estimated that as many as one in four people live with a phobia.

Although there are literally hundreds of phobias - everything from a fear of heights, spiders or public speaking to a fear of eggs, shadows or even string - they can be classified into three basic categories:

- Specific phobias: fear of a specific object or situation, such as animals, needles, water, flying or heights
- Agoraphobia: fear of open spaces
- Social phobias: fear of negative evaluation from others, such as when eating, writing or speaking in public

Of the three, specific phobias respond best to the 90-minute treatment described in this book. Agoraphobia and social phobias can also be treated using the same principles, though it generally takes longer.

If you are thinking that your phobia is different and will not respond to treatment, research shows that any specific phobia can be treated, regardless of the age it began, its severity and whether there is a history of phobias in your family. What is most important is how *determined* you are

to overcome your phobia, and also how diligently you follow the steps in this book.

There are endless misconceptions about the causes and treatment of phobias. Can you relate to any of the following?

- 'People with phobias are obviously attention seekers because their fear is so irrational.'
- 'To get rid of a phobia you just need to ignore it.'
- 'Phobias are caused by chemical imbalances in the brain.'
- 'Only medication can help a phobia.'
- 'Phobias indicate a lack of intelligence and/or a weak personality.'

Over the next ten chapters, I will show you that none of these statements is true, and instead, give you the tools to overcome your phobia. It's crucial that you *read each chapter* – don't skip over any – and that you take the time to complete the practical exercises. Even if you feel an exercise isn't necessary for your situation, it's important to discipline yourself to do it anyway, and to keep practising it. Each exercise gives you another skill that you'll need for your 90-minute treatment. In the same way that a professional athlete trains before a main event, you are training yourself to confront your phobia. Every time you complete an exercise, you are indirectly tackling your phobia.

In the first chapter I will show you how a phobia gets stronger every time you avoid it, and in later chapters you will see that when you beat avoidance, a phobia comes crashing down like a house of cards.

But *Fix Your Phobia* is not only useful for people with phobias; it is also a great resource for family and friends who want to assist them. Living with a phobic person can be difficult. Not knowing how to help them and having to



alter your own life to accommodate someone else's phobia can be frustrating. If you want to help someone face their phobia, your role as a support person or 'phobia friend' is vital. I discuss this in detail in [Chapter 7](#).

You can face a phobia in one of two ways: gradually over a period of weeks, or rapidly in 90 minutes. Think of removing a band-aid. You can do it slowly and it will painfully remove one hair at a time. Or you can pull it off quickly, with only minor and brief discomfort. Both methods achieve the same results. By choosing the rapid approach, you will do more than successfully treat your phobia - you will also learn some amazing skills that can be applied to other challenges in your life.

# 1

## You're not weird!

### **What is a phobia?**

Phobias are incredibly common, and anyone can get them. But what exactly *is* a phobia? Put simply, it's a strong, involuntary fear of a particular object or situation. The fear reaction is irrational because it is way out of proportion to the actual danger the object/situation presents. People with a phobia will usually completely avoid the object/situation (called a 'phobic stimulus'), or endure it with intense distress.

The degree to which a phobia disrupts your life generally depends on the ease with which you can avoid your phobic stimulus. For example, it is a lot easier to avoid snakes if you live in the city as opposed to the country. Yet, in the city it is a lot harder to avoid elevators, tunnels and heights.

Specific phobias can be grouped into five categories:

- Animal/insect phobias: fear of spiders, snakes, birds, bees, dogs etc.
- Natural environment phobias: fear of heights, storms (e.g. thunder, lightning, tornadoes), rivers, the ocean, waterfalls etc.
- Phobias of blood and/or medical procedures.
- Situational phobias: fear of airplanes and other forms of transport, elevators, tunnels, bridges, enclosed spaces etc.

- All other rare phobias: fear of choking, vomiting, contracting an illness, cotton balls, balloons, buttons, fish tanks, feathers, paper with holes in it, the number 13, loud or unpleasant sounds (e.g. fingernails on chalkboard), costumed characters etc.

### ***Disgust or fear?***

Certain phobias may make a person feel more disgusted than afraid. This is most common with phobias of spiders, rats, bees, snakes or blood. People with this sort of phobia feel so disgusted when exposed to their phobic stimulus that they experience nausea and may vomit. The feeling of disgust, though physically different from fear, still triggers avoidance and the attendant unpleasantness and difficulties of a phobia. Throughout this book, when I refer to a phobic response, I mean disgust as well as fear.

### **Who gets phobias?**

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Betsy had a phobia of heights that prevented her from doing a whole range of things, including going for job interviews in multistorey buildings, visiting anyone in a two-storey house, holidaying in multistorey motels and driving over bridges. Betsy often had vivid nightmares involving heights. Aside from her phobia, Betsy had a completely normal life. She was intelligent, quick-witted, caring and had a great sense of humour. Even with all these positive attributes, however, Betsy felt like a failure because she could not overcome her phobia. She had resigned herself to believing she was mentally weak.

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Like Betsy, do you believe that only weak people have phobias? Successful people who are strong, disciplined and