
Treating Agoraphobia

Agoraphobia is an intense fear of being somewhere you feel would be difficult to escape from. It can include a fear of being in a car, in a crowded building, or on a busy street. It may be hard for you to leave your home. Agoraphobia can cause real emotional distress. Treatment can help you manage your symptoms and overcome your fears. It may not be easy to work through your fears and it may not happen right away. Be patient. With help, you'll likely feel happier and less afraid.

Medicine

Medicine may be a key part of your treatment. It can help ease your symptoms even before you start therapy. It also may be a part of your ongoing care. Your healthcare provider can discuss your medicine options with you.

Don't stop any medicines unless you talk with your healthcare provider. Medicines usually need to be withdrawn over a period of time to prevent symptoms getting worse or potentially dangerous withdrawal effects.

Therapy

Cognitive therapy. This therapy teaches you to replace anxious thoughts with positive ones. For instance, you might be afraid in a crowded store or mall. You'll learn not to dwell on your fear. Instead, you might think, "I'm nervous right now, but this will pass, and I'll feel better soon."

Behavioral therapy. Working with your therapist, you will slowly learn to face your fears. At first, you may just be asked to think about the places or situations that scare you. Then, when you're ready, you can face your fears in person. You'll likely do this in stages. You might first be asked to stand outside a store. Next, you might walk inside for just a minute. Later on, you may buy something. When you feel safe with one step, you can go on to the next. Each time, you'll be less afraid.

Lifestyle changes

A healthy lifestyle can help you deal with stress. Make sure you have a healthy diet by eating plenty of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Get regular exercise at least 30 minutes on most days. Avoid using alcohol and other drugs.

Ideas to help you relax

Relaxation techniques can help you feel less anxious and ease the physical symptoms of a panic attack. One or more of the following may help:

- **Deep breathing exercises.** These teach you how to stay calm by taking slow, full breaths.
- **Progressive muscle relaxation.** You tense and then relax each muscle in your body.
- **Visualization.** You learn to relieve stress by thinking of a peaceful scene.
- **Biofeedback.** A special device or app helps you learn to relax your body.

You can find other activities that help ease stress and anxiety at the [National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health website](#).