
Unit Specification

UMH8 – Understanding phobias

Unit reference number: K/618/6288

Level: 2

Guided Learning (GL) hours: 9

Overview

Learners will develop an understanding of phobias. Learners will explore what is meant by the term phobia, the possible causes and the impact that phobias have on the individual and others. Learners will also explore the management and support options that are available for people suffering from phobias.

Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit, learners will:

LO1 Understand phobias

LO2 Understand the causes of phobia

LO3 Understand how phobias can affect individuals and others

LO4 Understand how to manage and support people with phobias

Unit content

LO1 Understand phobias

Know the difference between the terms 'phobia' 'specific' phobias, 'social' phobias and 'agoraphobia'

Taught content

- A phobia is an extreme, exaggerated or unrealistic form of fear or anxiety triggered by a particular situation or object even when there is no danger. Phobias can be more pronounced than fears
- There are two main groups of phobias:
 - Specific (or simple) phobias
 - Complex phobias
- Specific phobias
 - These centre around a particular object, animal, situation or activity
For example:
 - Animals – typically a fear of spiders, snakes or rodents
 - Environmental – germs, heights and deep water
 - Situational – fear of flying, the dentist, confined to small places
 - Bodily phobias
- Complex phobias
 - Associated with an overwhelming fear and anxiety of situations and circumstances. Complex phobias can be categorised into two main types
 - Agoraphobia
 - Fearful of places or situations where escape or help might not be possible if something were to go wrong. This usually results in a person avoiding certain situations such as travelling on public transport
 - Social phobia
 - Also known as social anxiety disorder, people with social phobias are fearful or anxious in social situations, e.g. a fear of public speaking

Know general signs and symptoms associated with phobias

Taught content

- People may experience phobias in different ways and will typically not have any symptoms until faced with the situation or phobia. General symptoms include:
 - Sweating
 - Trembling
 - Hot flushes or chills
 - Difficulty breathing
 - A choking sensation
 - Rapid heartbeat (tachycardia)

- Tightness in the chest
- Butterflies in the stomach
- Nausea
- Headaches and dizziness
- Feeling faint
- Dry mouth
- In more severe situations a person may develop psychological symptoms such as:
 - Fear of losing control
 - Feelings of dread
 - Fear of dying
- Symptoms associated with agoraphobia can vary in severity from slightly apprehensive about a situation to severely anxious and unable to cope with the situation

LO2 Understand the causes of phobia

Know the possible causes of phobias

Taught content

- There is no single cause of phobias. However, they are associated with a number of factors
 - Traumatic incident or events – a previous experience of a traumatic event, such as being in a car crash, may lead to a phobia of travelling in a car
 - Learned responses – these are phobias that are developed early in life and are often associated with learning the response from a family member. For example, a parent who is overly anxious about a situation may influence the way you cope with the same situation
 - Genetics – there is some evidence to suggest that some people are born with a tendency to be more anxious than others
- Agoraphobia is often associated with a combination of a number of interlinked phobias, e.g. a fear of open spaces and a fear of feeling trapped (claustrophobia)

LO3 Understand how phobias can affect individuals and others

Know how phobias can affect the individual and others

Taught content

- Phobias can limit and have a detrimental effect on a person's life. People with phobias will often avoid places and situations which can then have an impact on their mental wellbeing
- Phobias can affect a person's life in the following ways
 - Effects on the individual:
 - Fear of exposure to specific phobias
 - Panic attacks
 - Unable to participate in certain social activities
 - Agoraphobia – left untreated agoraphobia can severely reduce a person's quality of life, including:
 - Isolation and loneliness associated with the need to deal with the specific phobias
 - Negative feelings leading to depression and low self-esteem
 - Financial consequences associated with withdrawal or isolation
 - Drug and alcohol misuse as a coping strategy
 - Effects on others:
 - Stress and anxiety among family members
 - Financial pressures associated with phobias affecting family members' ability to work
 - Anger and resentment associated with life changes that have to be made to accommodate phobias

LO4 Understand how to manage and support people with phobias

Know the self-help programs to help reduce the symptoms of a phobia

Taught content

- Many people with phobias are able to manage the condition with some self-help programs. These can include:
 - Lifestyle changes
 - Regular exercise or physical activity – this can help to take an individual's mind off of the phobia and anxiety. It has a physical health benefit and can also make people feel more relaxed
 - Eating regularly has the effect of reducing irritability and anxiety associated with hunger
 - Getting enough sleep helps to reduce anxiety and irritability
 - Avoiding or reducing stimulants such as caffeine. Stimulants such as these can make some people feel more anxious
 - Exposure therapy – this involves gradually increasing the length of time being exposed to a phobia. This is a form of desensitisation to the phobia
 - Relaxation techniques – as with physical activity and exercise, activities such as breathing techniques can be used promote relaxation
 - Visualisation – this can be used in conjunction with other relaxation techniques to mentally visualise how an individual can deal with phobias or anxious responses to situations
 - Self-help groups – meeting other people with similar experiences can be useful to develop coping strategies and talk through anxieties that materialise from being exposed to phobias

Know the treatments that can be used to support people phobias

Taught content

- Where it is not possible to avoid phobias, other treatments or a combination of treatments may be used
 - Talking therapies – such as counselling, psychotherapy or cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) have been shown to be effective in treating phobias
 - Medication – medication is not usually the first choice in the treatment of phobias but can be used to treat anxiety associated with phobias
There are generally in the form of:
 - Antidepressants
 - Tranquilisers
 - Beta-blockers

Know the organisations available to help with the management and support of phobias

Taught content

- Examples of agencies and organisations that help with the management of phobias are
 - Mind – information on phobias, including symptoms, causes and how to access treatment and support. Get tips for helping yourself, plus guidance for friends and family
 - <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/phobias/treatment/>
 - TOP UK – A registered charity (1034932) specialising in supported self-help for sufferers of phobias
 - <https://www.topuk.org>
 - NHS – information on phobias, its types, help and support mechanisms
 - <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/phobias/treatment/>

Guide to taught content

The content contained within the unit specification is not prescriptive or exhaustive but is intended to provide helpful guidance to teachers and learners with the key areas that will be covered within the unit and relating to the kinds of evidence that should be provided for each assessment objective specific to the unit learning outcomes.

Assessment requirements

1. Knowledge outcomes

Learners must complete an external theory examination for this unit. This will consist of a multiple-choice question paper which is mapped to the relevant assessment criteria stated below. The theory examination will test the knowledge and understanding from across learning outcomes 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Learners should use the unit content sections of this unit to aid revision since exam questions will test the full breadth of content over time.

Learning Outcome	Assessment Criteria	Assessment requirement
LO1 Understand phobias	1.1. Describe what is meant by the terms 'phobia' 'specific' phobias, 'social' phobias and 'agoraphobia'	External theory examination
	1.2. Outline the general signs and symptoms associated with phobias	

Learning Outcome	Assessment Criteria	Assessment requirement
LO2 Understand the causes of phobia	2.1. Describe the possible causes of phobias	External theory examination

Learning Outcome	Assessment Criteria	Assessment requirement
LO3 Understand how phobias can affect individuals and others	3.1. Describe how phobias can affect individuals and others	External theory examination

Learning Outcome	Assessment Criteria	Assessment requirement
LO4 Understand how to manage and support people with phobias	4.1. Outline the self-help programs to help reduce the symptoms of a phobia	External theory examination
	4.2. Outline the treatments that can be used to support people phobias	
	4.3. Outline two organisations available to help with the management and support of phobias	

Document History

Version	Issue Date	Changes	Role
v1.0	01/04/2021	First published	Product and Regulation Manager
v2.0	01/04/2021	Corrected wording on page 7 from 'depression' to 'phobias'	Qualifications Administrator