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The Genesis Gem, a quarterly newsletter, wants to bring up a significant topic that may be of interest to you; phobias.

Things That Go Bump in the Mind: FIGHTING PHOBIAS

Sally is on her way to see a medical specialist on the top floor of the tallest building in her town, the fourth floor. This trip is really going to challenge her. Usually she avoids anything higher than a kitchen stepladder because heights scare the living daylights out of her—always have. But she's got to get help and hopes for the best as she pushes the button of doom for the fourth floor. Fortunately there's no one else in the elevator when she gets in. The embarrassment of having people see the fear on her face only makes matters worse.

Everything seems okay as the first floor rolls by, then the second. But suddenly, as the third floor approaches, panic seizes Sally as if in a death grip. Squeezing the breath out of her, Sally feels she's going to faint. Her knees turn to Jell-O and her heart starts a slam-dunk dance in her chest. By the time the fourth floor arrives and the door opens, her palms are so sweaty you'd swear they had sprung a leak. She would escape this terrifying ordeal if she could, but even if she could try and run, she knows her legs wouldn't work! Fortunately, the doctor's office is right across the hallway and she feels comforted by the thought that in just a few seconds, someone would be able to save her if needed.

Sally, like so many today, suffers from a phobia—one of many irrational fears that

haunt and torment otherwise normal, healthy people, **Christians included.** An estimated one in five adults suffers from some kind of phobia. Phobias can take many forms - fear of elevators, clocks, mushrooms, animals, closed spaces, open spaces, dentists, doctors, therapists, and even public speaking. Exposure to the phobic trigger causes rapid breathing, pounding heartbeat, and sweaty palms. Many are barely able to travel by air, cross an ocean in a liner, or take a trip on a freeway to visit family, and while they may force themselves to undertake these activities, they feel exhausted and demoralized afterwards. Worst of all, those who suffer think that they are the only ones who must live with this misery! There are three defined types of phobias:

Specific or Simple Phobias - fear of an object or situation, such as spiders, heights or flying.

Social Phobias - fear of embarrassment or humiliation in social settings.

Agoraphobia - fear of being away from a safe place, such as your home, and exposed to deadly risk. (This often accompanies Panic Anxiety.) Severe agoraphobia can imprison a person in their own home for a lifetime!

While no one knows for sure how phobias develop, it clearly seems like it is learned, as a parent with a phobia can easily instill the same phobia in a child at an early age. A part of the brain called the amygdala has been programmed to create this fear, bypassing any reason. Often, there is no explanation for the origin of the fear, though sometimes a person can identify an event or trauma - such as being chased by a dog -

that triggered the phobia. What puzzles experts is why some people who experience such an event develop a phobia and others do not. Many psychologists believe the cause lies in a combination of genetic predisposition mixed with environmental and social causes.

Christians can also struggle with phobias. Christian believers, in particular, find that even a 'small' phobia can be very devastating because they see it as a failure to achieve God's healing or a lack of faith. They hide their pain for fear of rejection. Often they feel a profound sense of having failed God in some way. Satan can have a field day with many phobia sufferers. Feel free to send this article to someone you know who may be suffering. While no drug can cure a phobia, some medications can help reduce the anxiety that accompanies these fears. While medications are often helpful, the major treatment modality is something called systematic desensitization. In this treatment, someone with a phobia learns to confront his or her fear very gradually. For instance, someone who fears elevators is first helped just to get used to walking in and out of elevators. Then the door is allowed to close and open. And so on. Sooner or later the fear begins to subside as the brain is then reprogrammed to not fear elevators. Only a clinical professional with training should undertake this treatment with a client.

God does not want to see His children suffer unnecessarily. And, since there is effective help for undoing even the most entrenched of phobias, people need to be willing to seek such help.

This article was written by Archibald D. Hart, Ph.D. and produced by the American Association of Christian Counselors.

Phobic? Contact Genesis Counseling of Fort Myers. We can help. 239-939-5504 Or glreynolds@comcast.net

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Springtime at Genesis Counseling is a special time for the counselors. We renew our enthusiasm for meeting new clients and beginning a journey with them to discover how to be more like our Savior. Jesus awaits us as we prepare for the Easter season. He hopes we will recognize our need for Him. Through prayer and wise counsel, much healing can occur.

Who Are We?

Genesis Counseling of Fort Myers can offer individual, marriage and family counseling to you and/or your family NOW! We are very accommodating in our appointment times with daytime, evening and weekend hours. We realize many folks can't afford to take time off of work or school week after week. Very few places offer the extent of hour we have available. Call today at (239) 939-5504.

A testimonial...

I guess it's OK to say that I have been in therapy for years, since I was a child. I switched from counselor to counselor. Sometimes they moved on. Sometimes it was time for me to move on. I need to be accountable to someone since I do not have a family nearby. I have spent plenty of time trying to figure out life on my own. The Genesis counselor that I see regularly these days has put me at ease, finally. I don't need to figure out life on my own. My God, who was always rather impersonal in the past, has now come to my rescue. He is always there for me and my counselor reminds me of His presence in my life. That is what God wants. I will leave it in His capable hands. And, I am happy!

-not going it alone anymore



Possible dyslexia?

It has come to our attention that few schools test for dyslexia anymore. Genesis now has an assessment tool that can help with the process to see if a child is having difficulties because of dyslexia, a learning disability that can effect school grades and performance. Call for an appointment to see if your child needs these tests.

[Check out the article for this quarter on the previous page](#)



This quarter's feature is all about dealing with phobias.

Support Groups

Keep in mind that Genesis offers group opportunities when the need arises. Call to let us know if you would like to participate in a group counseling program. It is a commitment of time over a period of weeks, sometimes months, but it can be really helpful as well as cost effective. Not everyone is meant to be part of a group effort so you will need to contact Genesis for an over-the-phone interview to start the process.

A Recipe for You!

Banana Bread

Ingredients:

1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 cup butter (1 stick), room temperature
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1 large egg
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 large ripe bananas, mashed
1/2 cup chopped dried apricots or dates
1/2 cup chopped pecans or walnuts

Preparation:

Grease bottom of a 9x5x3-inch loaf pan.

In a bowl, combine flour, baking powder, salt, and baking soda. In a mixing bowl with a hand-held electric mixer, beat together butter and sugar on medium speed. Beat until light and fluffy; beat in egg and vanilla extract.

With mixer at low speed, beat in flour, alternating with mashed bananas. Stir in chopped apricots or dates and the chopped nuts. Bake at 350° until golden brown -- a toothpick inserted into center of bread comes out clean.

Cool bread in pan on a wire rack for 5 minutes; turn bread out onto rack; cool completely. For best flavor, wrap banana bread tightly in foil and store overnight before slicing and serving.

Makes one loaf of banana nut bread.
Yummy!