

Fear: Healthy or Unhealthy?

By Beth Beutler

Most people are afraid of something. Some are more fearful than others, but very few people have no fears at all.

Some fears are a natural mechanism to protect us from danger. For example, we have a healthy fear of stepping out onto a road full of traffic or jumping off a rocky cliff. Our minds are designed to give us some natural instincts so that we don't do things that would harm ourselves.

Sometimes, though, people suffer from unnatural or unfounded fears. These are sometimes referred to as phobias. According to the dictionary, a phobia is a "persistent, irrational fear of a specific object, activity, or situation that leads to a compelling desire to avoid it."

There are many types of phobias. Examples of phobias include fear of heights (acrophobia), fear of closed spaces (claustrophobia), fear of leaving one's home (agoraphobia), and fear of doctors (iatrophobia). There are many others. You could possibly name a phobia for any sort of situation that makes you fear it and want to avoid it.

Because a phobia can be extreme and irrational, it can deeply affect the person suffering from it. Phobias can arise in different ways, but sometimes, they are created when a person feels anxious and ties it to a particular situation. For example, let's say that someone goes to the doctor and has to be given some type of uncomfortable treatment for something. Later, that person may associate any visit to a doctor with the painful or anxiety-producing treatment he or she underwent years ago.

This can also happen with other fears. Let's say you went up to a tall tower, and looked down, imagining that you were falling. Or perhaps you had a nightmare about falling. It's possible that you would want to avoid going up to tall buildings or flying because of what you felt during the nightmare or how you felt the last time you were on top of a tall place, such as a rollercoaster.

Sometimes, we are exposed to unfortunate events that happen in the lives of others. That can contribute to our own fears. For example, because of television, radio, newspaper and Internet news, we are bombarded with stories of events that happen to others. Often, these are not pleasant. Long ago, people were not able to hear about accidents and troubles around the world. But now we are so inter-connected that we hear "bad news" almost every day. It is easy to then imagine yourself going through the same situation, and you may begin to connect everyday opportunities with a one-time unfortunate event for someone else.

Let's go back to our rollercoaster example. Let's say you really enjoy riding roller coasters. However, before going to the amusement park this past summer, you heard a news story about some people who got stuck upside down on one. Now, the chances of that happening to you are pretty slim. Millions of people ride coasters daily, and they work fine. But because you became aware of the danger, you could develop an unhealthy fear of ever riding a coaster again.

In the same way, you can help yourself overcome phobias. If you have a particular fear, try to relax and think about why that bothers you so much. If you did have a bad experience, perhaps in a closed-in space, try to think of positive experiences you've also had. For example, have you enjoyed camping in a small tent in a cozy sleeping bag? If you fear leaving your house, can you think of great times you had with friends outdoors? How a doctor helped you feel better after being sick? Or the great view from the top of the building? Concentrate on the positive experiences, and you may slowly recondition your thought patterns. After all, the thought patterns are what contribute to our feelings.

Now, this doesn't mean to "throw caution to the wind" and do crazy things that may be dangerous or unwise.



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However, it does mean to think about whether your fear is a natural mechanism to keep you aware of your choices and safe, or if it is blocking you from enjoying life. Try not to let fear have that much power over you. Use fear as a healthy tool, but don't let it rule your life.

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Questions

_____ 1. Which of the following phobias is NOT listed in the article?

- A. fear of heights (acrophobia)
- B. fear of closed spaces (claustrophobia)
- C. fear of animals (zoophobia)
- D. fear of doctors (iatrophobia)

_____ 2. True or false? A phobia is a persistent, irrational fear.

- A. false
- B. true

3. When a person is afraid of leaving home, he has _____.

4. Can fear ever be a good thing?

5. The writer says we are more aware of news today because of what?

6. We feel a phobia when a certain object or event makes us feel _____.

7. What is one way to overcome a phobia?

Strategies for Effective Reading - While You Read

By Patti Hutchison

By now you have probably heard about active reading. But what does this mean, exactly? Are you supposed to read while you rollerblade? That would be dangerous! So, how do you read actively? There are many strategies that are easy to follow.

One active reading strategy you might have heard about is called KWL. The "K" stands for what you KNOW about the topic. The "W" stands for what you WANT to learn about the topic. The "L" stands for what you LEARNED about the subject.

The "K" and the "W" parts of this strategy are done during pre-reading. The "L" is strategy you can use while you are reading. You can easily make your own KWL chart. All you need is a piece of paper divided into three columns. Mark "K" at the top of the first column, "W" at the top of the middle column, and "L" at the top of the third column.

Fill in the "K" and the "W" as you think about the topic. Then, as you read, fill in the "L." Write down anything you learned about the topic that you didn't already know. Pay special attention to the answers to your "W" questions. Now you have actively read the text and have made a great study guide at the same time.

Another effective reading strategy is to draw pictures as you read. Choose important vocabulary words and draw a picture to remind yourself what each one means. Let's say you are studying angles in geometry. Draw and label each type of angle: acute, right, obtuse, and straight. Give them personalities as you draw. For example, you might draw long-lashed eyes and a smile inside the "A-Cute" angle. Doing anything that helps you to remember the word and its definition is fair game.

As you read, you might want to make notes in the margins of the text. This is another effective reading strategy. However, make sure you have permission to do this before you start! There are several kinds of notations to include. Write down questions you have. You can also write in how certain parts of the text make you feel. Connect something to background knowledge you have about the topic. These types of responses are different from merely marking the text by underlining or highlighting. This activity will put you more in touch with the writer's purpose. It will help you to think beyond the facts being presented.

A simpler way to read actively is to take recitation breaks. After reading a portion of the text, close your book. Try to recite answers to the who, what, where, when, why, and how questions. If you can't come up with some of the answers, go back and re-read. Focus your reading to find the answers to those questions.

Just like exercising or sports, effective reading strategies use muscles. As you read actively, you will use your eyes, hands, and mouth. These activities will help make connections to your brain. This will give you a better understanding and help you to remember what you have read.



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Strategies for Effective Reading - While You Read

Questions

_____ 1. What does the "L" stand for in a KWL chart?

- A. what you like about the topic
- B. what you have learned from reading the text
- C. what you want to learn

2. What should you pay special attention to when you are writing in the "L" column?

3. What should you do before making notations in the margins of the text?

4. What is one kind of notation you might mark in the margin?

5. What questions should you try to answer during a recitation break?

_____ 6. What should you do if you can't answer the questions during a recitation break?

- A. go back and re-read
- B. ask different questions
- C. ignore them

Music for Weddings and Beyond

By Beth Beutler

If you attend a wedding, listen and see if you hear a work by Felix Mendelssohn. It is often used when the bride and groom leave the altar after being pronounced "husband and wife." It is a joyful, exciting piece, and very popular. This work, called *The Wedding March*, was part of a piece of music written for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Mendelssohn was born on February 3, 1809, in Hamburg, Germany. His family was originally Jewish, but converted to Christianity in 1816, at which time Felix took on the names Jakob Ludwig and the surname Bartholdy, named after a piece of property purchased by Felix's uncle.

At six years old, Mendelssohn began taking music lessons. He is considered to be one of music's child prodigies. (A prodigy refers to people, especially young people, who seem to have an out-of-the-ordinary talent for something.) At only nine years old, he appeared in a chamber music presentation. (Chamber music refers to music performed by a small group of musicians, often in a room, or chamber, of a home.) He wrote music even as a youngster and published his first work at 13 years of age. It was a piece to be used as a piano quartet. At 15, he wrote his first symphony. At 18, he wrote an opera, but because it did not perform well, he discontinued work on that type of production.

Mendelssohn's style tended toward classical standards, and he disliked some of the forms of music coming from other places such as Paris. His music shows an influence from Mozart, Bach, and Handel, yet he incorporated unique and sometimes dramatic elements of his own as he was inspired by emotions, the outdoors, and literature.

Mendelssohn was blessed with a comfortable life and opportunities to learn different languages and artistic skills such as watercolors. He also had a friendship with Goethe, a talented man with great influence in literary and scientific circles. He attended college at the University of Berlin and then went to England for the first of ten different visits. During those years, many people began to enjoy his music, including Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. Even so, he missed out on an opportunity to lead the Berlin Singakademie, a choral society. It is possible that people considered Mendelssohn too young or feared he would be too creative with musical style and add too many new elements to music. People may have even had a concern about his Jewish roots.

Mendelssohn did have an opportunity to conduct the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, which validated his feelings of connections with Germany. It also may have made up for some of the disappointment felt over losing the opportunity to have a leadership role in the Singakademie.

Mendelssohn was married and had five children. He had a happy life, but he died at the early age of 38 in November 1847 after experiencing several strokes. His sister had died earlier that year, which had a great effect on Felix. It is thought that the combination of too much work and issues with anxiety may have contributed to his health problems.

So, the next time you hear *The Wedding March* and watch the bride and groom leave the altar, think of Felix Mendelssohn and the contribution he made to the world's collection of great music.



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Music for Weddings and Beyond

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_____ 1. True or false. You can infer that Felix Mendelssohn grew up in a poor, disadvantaged family.
A. False
B. True

_____ 2. How old was Mendelssohn when he performed in a chamber music presentation?
A. 9
B. 13
C. 15
D. 18

3. Mendelssohn's family was originally _____.

_____ 4. In which country did Mendelssohn also develop a following?
A. United States
B. France
C. Sweden
D. Great Britain

5. Why might Mendelssohn have lost out on the job to lead the Singakademie?

_____ 6. Was Mendelssohn a family man?
A. Yes
B. No

7. What event happened in the year of his death that greatly affected him?

8. At what events is one of Mendelssohn's pieces used often, even today?
