

Fears and Phobias

1. Are you afraid of the dark? What do you do when you are in a dark room?
2. When you were a child, what were you most afraid of? Are you still afraid of it now?
3. Do you know anyone who is very scared of something? (spiders, heights, flying, etc.) What do they do when they see it or think about it?
4. Have you ever been to a haunted house or a scary attraction? Was it fun?
5. Are you afraid of heights? How do you feel when you are in a high place?
6. Have you ever been so scared that your heart was racing? What happened?
7. Have you ever had a scary dream that felt very real? What was it about?
8. Are you afraid of any animals? (snakes, spiders, dogs, etc.) Why?
9. Do you like scary rides at amusement parks? (roller coasters, drop towers, etc.) Why or why not?
10. Are you afraid of flying? How do you feel when you are on an airplane?

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1. What is the scariest animal you have ever seen? What made it so scary?
2. What is the scariest thing you have ever done? Would you do it again?
3. What is the scariest movie or TV show you have ever watched? What made it so scary?
4. Have you ever had a big fear that you eventually got over? What helped you get past it?
5. What is the most unusual fear or phobia you have ever heard of? What makes it so strange?
6. What do you do when you feel afraid? Does anything actually help you feel better?
7. What scary stories or legends are popular in your culture? What makes them so creepy?
8. Are there any foods, places, or situations you avoid because they make you uncomfortable or scared? Why do you avoid them?
9. Have you ever been scared of something and then realized it was nothing? Tell me about it.
10. Do you think some people actually enjoy being scared? Why do you think that is?

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1. Do you prefer scary movies or funny movies? What's good about each?
2. What is a fear that is very common in your country or culture? Why do you think so many people there have it?
3. Are you more afraid of things in nature, like storms and snakes, or things made by people, like tall buildings and fast cars? Why?
4. Should people with serious phobias be encouraged to face their fears, or should they be allowed to just avoid what scares them? Why or why not?
5. Do you think fear can sometimes be useful or even helpful? Give me some examples.
6. If you could get rid of one of your fears overnight, which one would you choose and why? What would be different about your life?
7. How do you think parents can help their children when they are very scared of something? Is it common for parents in your country to talk about fears with their kids?
8. Some people say that men are expected to hide their fears more than women are. Do you think that is true in your country? Is it a good thing or a bad thing?
9. Do you think people are born with certain fears, or are most fears learned from their environment and experiences? What makes you think so?
10. Do you think people become more or less fearful as they get older? What makes you think so?
11. What do you think makes some people braver than others? Is bravery something you can learn?
12. Should schools teach children how to deal with their fears? Why or why not?
13. Do you think social media has created new fears that didn't exist before? What are some examples?

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1. How does the way fear is portrayed in movies and TV shows compare to how fear actually works in real life? What does popular media get wrong?
2. How is the treatment of phobias different today compared to how it was treated 50 years ago? What do you think about those changes?
3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of exposure therapy, the idea of slowly facing a fear, compared to medication or talking therapy?
4. How does growing up in a culture that talks openly about mental health and fears differ from growing up in one that treats it as a private or shameful topic? How has that affected you personally?
5. In your opinion, how much responsibility do news organizations have when reporting on things like crime, disease, or disasters, events that can make people more fearful than necessary? What can be done to improve that?
6. What are the advantages and disadvantages of exposing children to small amounts of risk and fear? How does this affect their development?
7. Fear of public speaking is one of the most common fears in the world. Why do you think speaking in front of others is so frightening, and what strategies actually help people overcome it?
8. How does fear of failure affect the way people make big decisions, like choosing a career or starting a business? How is it different from being cautious?
9. How does living with a constant fear or anxiety affect a person's relationships, career, and daily life? What can be done to help people in that situation?
10. Companies use fear in advertising to sell products like insurance, security systems, and health supplements. How effective is this, and where should the line be drawn?
11. Many people learn about phobias and mental health from social media and online content. How accurate do you think this information usually is, and what happens when people self-diagnose based on what they see online?

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1. Why have horror and fear-based entertainment been popular across almost every human culture and throughout history? What does that tell us about why humans evolved to feel fear in the first place?
2. Governments and advertisers sometimes use fear deliberately to change people's behavior: think of public health campaigns, political ads, or security messaging. When does using fear as a tool cross the line from legitimate persuasion into manipulation?
3. In recent years, anxiety and phobias have become much more common, or at least much more openly discussed. Do you think the world has genuinely become more frightening, or have people simply become less able to tolerate discomfort and uncertainty?
4. In many countries, therapy and counseling carry a significant social stigma: seeking help for a phobia or anxiety disorder is seen as a sign of weakness. How does that stigma interact with generational differences in attitudes toward mental health, and do you think the stigma is actually decreasing as quickly as people say it is?
5. Children today grow up with climate anxiety, pandemic fears, and constant online safety warnings that previous generations never experienced. How might growing up with these new fears change the way an entire generation sees the world?
6. We tell people to 'face their fears,' but we also tell them to 'trust their instincts.' When does fear protect us and when does it hold us back, and how can a person tell the difference?
7. Courage is admired in every culture, but what counts as 'brave' varies greatly: standing up to authority in one place, enduring suffering silently in another. How do cultural values determine what we call courage and what we call foolishness?
8. The pharmaceutical industry, therapy practices, and self-help culture all offer different approaches to dealing with fear and anxiety. How do economic interests influence which approaches become mainstream, and what gets lost in the process?
9. Social media algorithms tend to promote content that triggers fear and outrage because it gets more engagement. How is this changing what people are actually afraid of, and is there any realistic way to fix it?
10. Some fears that were once considered reasonable, like fear of flying or fear of strangers, are statistically irrational, while risks people ignore every day, like driving or unhealthy eating, are far more dangerous. Why are humans so bad at matching their fears to actual risks, and does knowing the statistics change anything?