



vita
health group

What is Agoraphobia?

Name:

Date:



What is Agoraphobia?

Agoraphobia is a very common type of **anxiety disorder**.

It is about feeling anxious being in places or situations that could be difficult or embarrassing to get out of, or where you might not be able to get help if you have a panic attack or panic symptoms.

In the UK, up to **2 in 100 people** have panic disorder, with **around a third** of people going on to develop Agoraphobia. It is estimated that around 1.5 million people in the UK experience Agoraphobia.

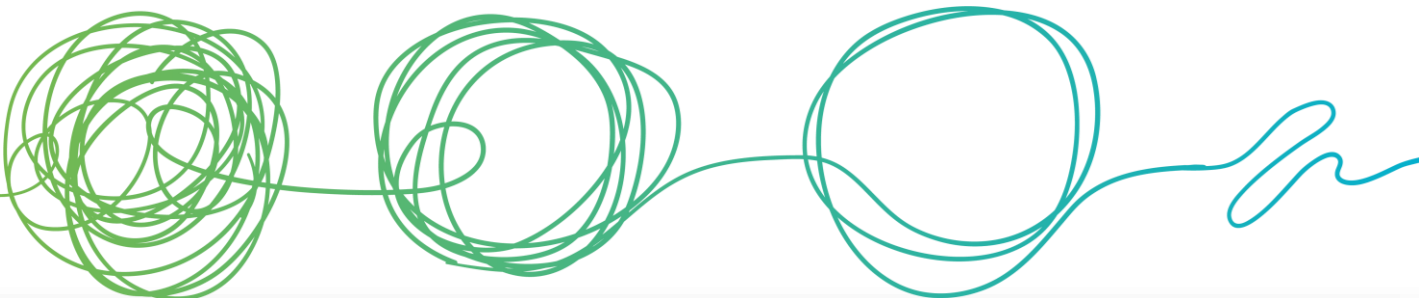
Agoraphobia can develop for a number of reasons.

Some people may develop Agoraphobia as a result of Panic Disorder. However, not all people with Agoraphobia have Panic Disorder.

To manage your anxiety, you may start to avoid particular places or situations. Avoiding particular situations may help in the short term, but can lead to your problems worsening over time.

Agoraphobia can sometimes develop after a panic attack. You may start to feel extremely anxious or worried about having another panic attack, and experience these symptoms each time you are in a similar situation.

People with Agoraphobia also commonly experience 'monophobia' (dislike being alone) or 'claustrophobia' (anxiety in small, confined spaces).



What is a Panic Attack?

A panic attack is a sudden period of intense fear

People experience symptoms such as:



Shortness of breath



Rapid heart rate or palpitations



Sweating



Numbness



Shaking



A feeling that something bad is going to happen

Panic attacks typically lasts for about 30 minutes, but the duration can vary

Panic attacks themselves are not dangerous

Panic attacks can occur due to a number of disorders including panic disorder, agoraphobia, social anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder or depression

They can be triggered or occur unexpectedly



What is Agoraphobia?

Agoraphobia is anxiety about being in places or situations that may be difficult to escape from, or where help may not be available in the event of having a panic attack or panic-like symptoms.

Agoraphobia is a marked fear or anxiety about two (or more) of the following five situations:



Using public transport



Standing in line or being in a crowd



Being in open spaces



Being outside the home alone



Being in enclosed spaces

The situations are avoided (e.g., travel is restricted) or are endured with marked distress or with anxiety about having a panic attack or panic-like symptoms or require the presence of a companion.

The fear or anxiety is out of proportion to the actual danger posed by the agoraphobic situations.

Avoidance strengthens our fears and significantly affects our quality of life. For example, many people with Agoraphobia find it hard to leave the place they live.



Panic attacks are pronounced anxiety

We are alive today because of anxiety – it has helped our ancestors survive and that is why we experience it also

Anxiety is:



Triggered by our mind's predictions of danger – our brain cannot predict the future, but it tries and if it thinks there is danger ahead, we will feel anxious. Our brain's predictions are not always accurate.



Meant to be unpleasant – to motivate us away from a situation that our brain thinks is dangerous



Protective – it therefore helps keep us safe if the danger we predicted is real



Sometimes intense – sometimes our anxiety can get very strong and overwhelm us



Self-limiting – anxiety passes and fades if we let it happen. Our body will not go on making us feel anxious forever and our anxiety will not carry on increasing indefinitely

Our body is adapted to handle high anxiety – an anxiety or panic attack will not do us physical harm or cause us to lose our mind, although this is a common fear during a panic attack

There are many different physical symptoms that might accompany anxiety.

Put a tick next to the symptoms that concern you or write down some of your own.

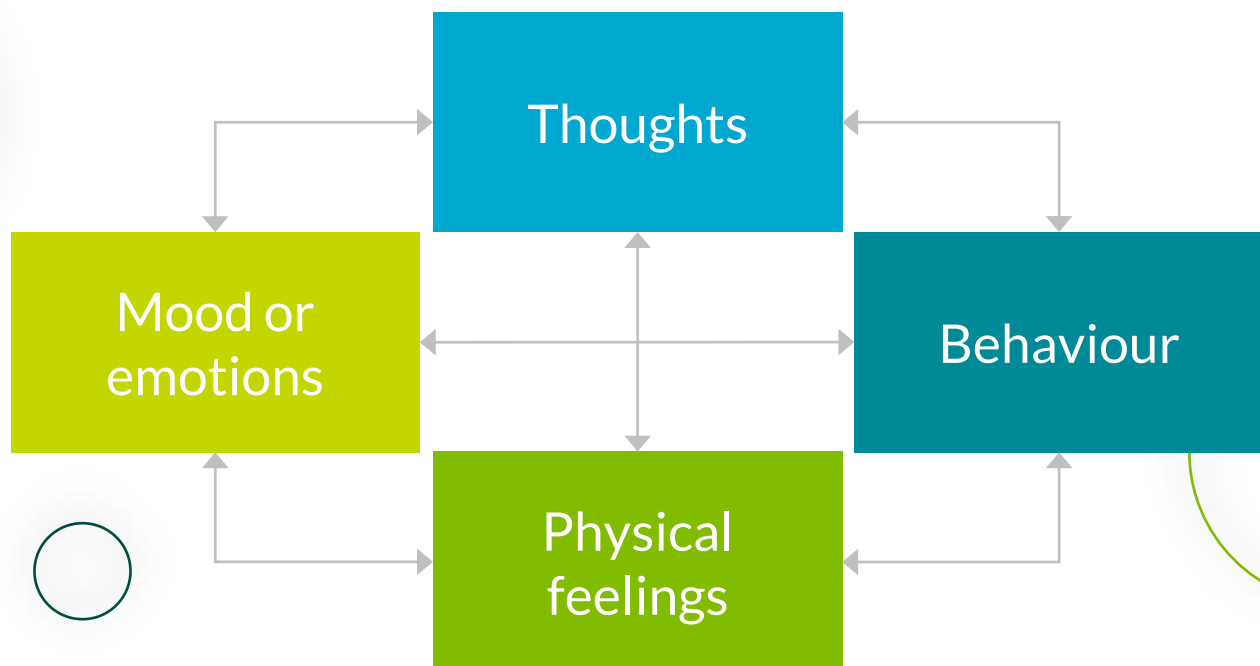
Common anxiety symptoms

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Strong or rapid heart rate | <input type="checkbox"/> Tension in muscles (shoulders, jaw) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Palpitations | <input type="checkbox"/> Tightness or pressure in the chest |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Breathing difficulties | <input type="checkbox"/> Needing to go to the toilet |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Light-headed or feeling faint | <input type="checkbox"/> Feelings of unreality, depersonalisation (feeling detached) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sweating | <input type="checkbox"/> Blurred vision or tunnel vision |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling hot or cold | <input type="checkbox"/> Numbness & tingling in extremities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling sick/nauseous | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Butterflies in your stomach | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dry mouth or throat | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Poor concentration & memory | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shaking, or trembling | |







Do you have any other physical symptoms?

The Cognitive Behavioural Model (CBT)



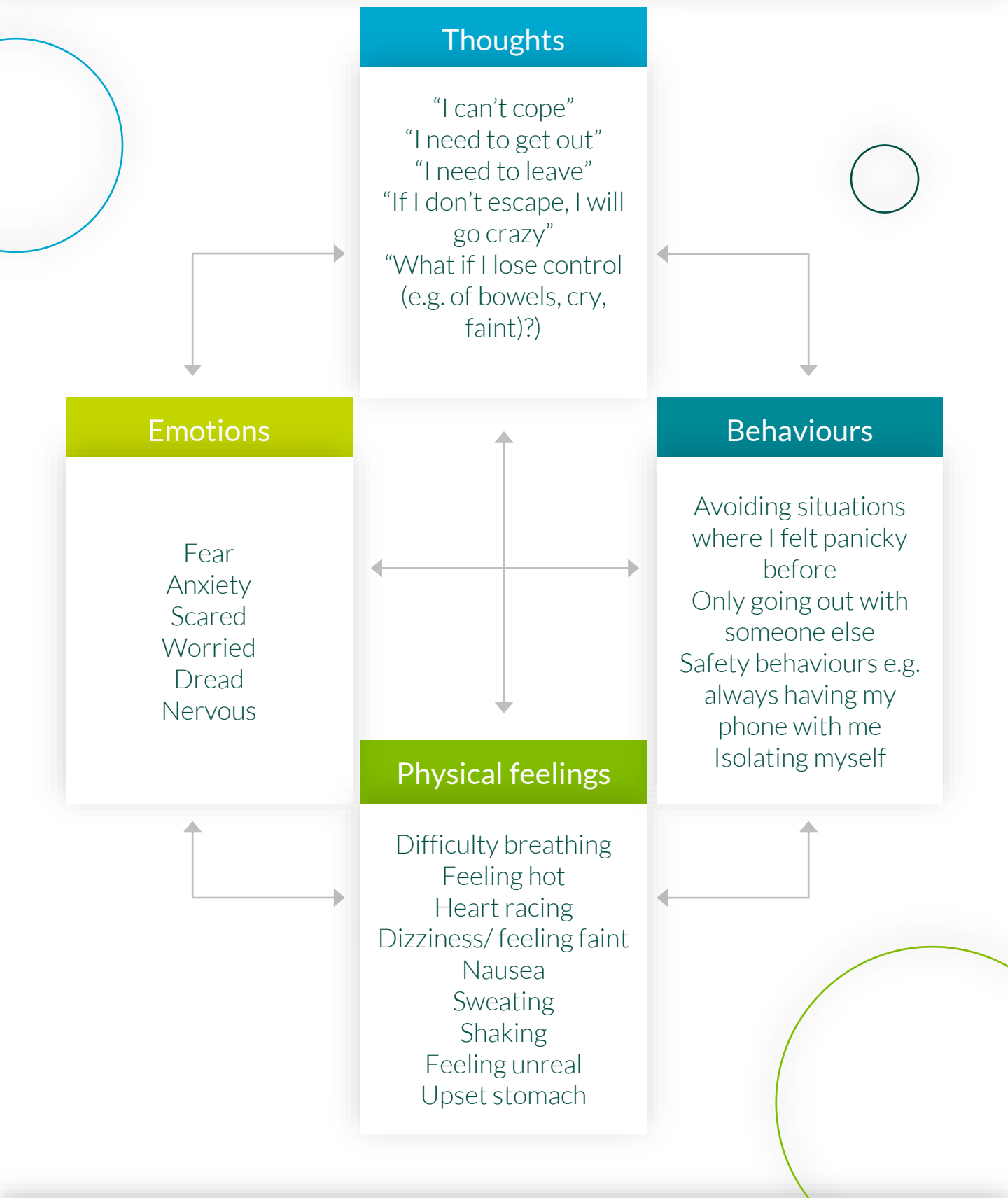
Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) focuses on present maintenance cycles to understand our difficulties. CBT looks at what physical symptoms, behaviours, thoughts and emotions we experience, and how each of these areas impact each other:

-  **Thoughts** are often negative and exaggerated (e.g. worst case scenario, self critical)
-  **Behaviours** are our attempts to cope with a situation (e.g. avoidance)
-  **Physical sensations** are how our body reacts to our problem (e.g. tension, tiredness)
-  **Mood or emotions** are how we feel (e.g. low, angry, scared, or embarrassed)

When we understand this, we can see that by changing one of these to be more helpful or positive, the others will change too. CBT uses evidence-based techniques to help us make positive changes to break out of these cycles and improve our wellbeing.

Throughout your sessions, we will help to introduce specific tools and techniques which you can use to help manage your mood and anxiety. You will be expected to practise these techniques and review these each week. This will enable you to become your own therapist.

Vicious Cycle of Agoraphobia



Your CBT Cycle

