

“I really want a calm birth experience but I feel stressed/anxious”: Understanding your phobias (fears), stress and anxiety and how I can help

As with any conditions that we may experience or develop there are different categories and levels. Not everyone will have a phobia (fear) but we all experience stress and anxiety at some point, at some level.

Stress originates from a disturbance of a person's mental and physical well-being, which passes as the situation/threat is resolved, but left untreated can lead to anxiety. *Contrary to popular belief, anxiety does not arise directly out of dangerous or painful situations but out of thoughts. In a given situation, it is the thought of potential danger, not the actual danger, that produces the symptoms of anxiety.* [Hypnosis for Change, 3rd edition, 1996, Hadley, Straudacher, pg 211]. It is perfectly normal to feel anxious from time to time and similarly to stress it is essential as these feelings help to focus the mind, problem-solve and protect us and those around us. Whilst anxiety can also pass, avoiding it will not make it go away as it will grow, returning in waves resulting in a feeling of apprehension and further developing into phobias/fears.

Phobias/fears are much more extreme than anxiety as it most commonly may have been something that has been witnessed as a child or in young adulthood built up over time. It is key to note that many phobias/fears are acute stemming from the subconscious, which can be treated.

“There is nothing to fear but fear itself” [First inauguration of Franklin D. Roosevelt]. We are born with only two fears - the fear of falling and the fear of loud sounds thus phobias are either learnt behaviours or can stem from an individual's initial sensitizing event (ISE) and in some instances can be hereditary. In the early 1900s an American Psychologist, John B. Watson and his graduate student, Rosalie Rayner carried out an experiment to explore if humans can be conditioned by learned behaviours. Watson believed that the fear of loud sounds is an innate unconditioned response and wanted to test these principles, now known as “classical conditioning”, with the aim to condition a phobia in an emotionally stable child. The result of the experiment found that the association from the loud noise and a furry animal (in this case a rat)

caused the child distress thus conditioning that child to a phobia of the association of the fear of a loud noise with a furry animal.

As with stress and anxiety, there are also a number of different types/levels of phobias from simple to complex. Talking openly about anxiety, stress and phobias have become increasingly acceptable in the current day with many businesses and scientists looking to offer alternative treatments thus avoiding medication including Oxford University developing a virtual reality therapy, which first looked to address the phobia of heights. Richard Bandler, co-creator of Neuro-linguistic Programming, used a tennis ball with his clients, passing back and forth to both hands, thus passing the hemispheres and whilst it reduced anxiety it didn't remove it permanently. Indeed scientists and researchers have been studying the effects of mental health conditions such as anxiety and stress for a number of years and through research have found that hypnotherapy can help relieve stress, fear and anxiety.

So if hypnoBIRTHING isn't hypnoTHERAPY how can I help?

In the first instance, it may reassure you that my training is accredited to the Royal College of Midwives. Whilst not a midwife myself, the content of my learning and delivery is important for me to enable your utmost care. The Pregnancy Relaxations and the BBB Workshop I provide at Heal Oxford Wellbeing, <https://healoxfordwellbeing.co.uk/> will include many skills and theories I am qualified to deliver. I have alluded to the subconscious above, which is how both my classes will start as we understand and respect the mind. Both classes will enable a relaxation of mind and body with the BBB Workshop providing in-depth knowledge where the brain and body can work together to move to a calm, efficient birth. I have received many comments from my classes of how much that is learnt can be taken into everyday life as well as in preparation for birth. Is it mind over matter? No, it is the mind AND body working together.

Why not book onto my next relaxation or workshop, alternatively you can read more on my work as a qualified hypnobirthing practitioner on my website www.ellivasehypnobirthing.co.uk

Pregnancy Relaxation

5 Nov <https://momence.com/s/88121309>

3 Dec <https://momence.com/s/88121310>

Brain, Body, Mind: Master the 3 pathways to a comfortable, calm, confident birth workshop

15 Oct <https://momence.com/s/88121315>

26 Nov <https://momence.com/s/88144998>

10 Dec <https://momence.com/s/88121317>

Emma Saville

29 Sep 2023