“Fear” is the normal response to a genuine danger. With phobias, the fear is either irrational or excessive. It is an abnormally fearful response to a danger that is imagined or is irrationally exaggerated. People can develop phobic reactions to animals (e.g., spiders), activities (e.g., flying), or social situations (e.g., eating in public or simply being in a public environment).

**Specific Phobia**

One category of phobia is specific phobia. As the name implies, people with a specific phobia generally have an irrational fear of specific objects or situations. The disability caused by this phobia can be severe if the feared object or situation is a common one. The most common specific phobia is fear of animals, particularly dogs (cynophobia) and snakes. Other specific phobias are fear of closed spaces (claustrophobia) and fear of flying (aerophobia).

**Treatment**

Any phobia that interferes with daily living and creates extreme disability should be treated. With proper treatment, the vast majority of phobia patients can completely overcome their fears. Effective relief can usually be gained through either cognitive behavior therapy, medication, or a combination of both. In cognitive behavior therapy, one meets with a trained therapist and confronts the feared object or situation in a carefully planned, gradual way and learns to control the mental and physical reactions of fear. By confronting rather than fleeing the object of fear, the person becomes accustomed to it and can lose the terror he or she once felt.

**source:** [http://www.healthyminds.org/letstalkfacts.cfm](http://www.healthyminds.org/letstalkfacts.cfm)

(slightly altered and simplified)

**Causes**

It is generally accepted that phobias arise from a combination of external events and internal predispositions. Some phobias such as arachnophobia (fear of spiders), however, may arise more easily due to an evolutionary trait that conditioned humans to fear certain creatures that could cause them harm. Many specific phobias can be traced back to a specific triggering event, usually a traumatic experience at an early age.

**source:** [wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phobia#Causes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phobia#Causes)

(slightly simplified)
Contemporary Topics 2 Words and Phrases: Unit 3

Words and Phrases from the Lecture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Other</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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Activity 1

Read each definition below and from the table above choose the word or phrase closest in meaning.
Words defined in the lecture are not listed. For the definitions of the **bold-faced** words, see Vocabulary Preview B.

1. related to someone’s body rather than their mind (characteristic)  
2. the importance of an event or action (significance)  
3. frightened of something or nervous about something (terrified)  
4. very frightened (terrified)  
5. a reaction to something that has happened or been said (response)  
6. to make someone well again after they have been ill (cure)  
7. (of arguments and theories) that cannot all be true or accepted (competing)  
8. to deliberately forget something bad you have learned (unlearn)  
9. to become well again after an illness (cure)  
10. to behave in a particular way in response to something (response)  
11. mainly; generally (mostly)  
12. to examine or check something carefully (classify)  
13. someone who is trained in psychology (psychologist)  
14. (of a quality, disease, or skill) to be common in a particular family (run in the family)  
15. to spend time trying to do something (run in the family)  
16. to say that something is not true (deny)  
17. more than a little, but much less than very (fairly)  
18. to continue for a particular period of time (last)
19. to show something that was previously hidden (    )
20. a group or class into which something is put (    )
21. relating to the way that your mind works (    )
22. to be unable to breathe because something is in your throat or there is not enough air (    )
23. not based on clear logical thought (    )

Activity 2
Read the sample sentences out loud several times paying special attention to the underlined parts.
For the sample sentences of the bold-faced words in the table, see Vocabulary Preview A.

1. Let’s go over some classifications of phobias.
2. A phobia is not a rational response.
3. As psychologists, we try to study these psychological problems.
4. Think about the significance of having these competing theories.
5. One characteristic of a phobia is its irrational response.
6. He had a very strong physical reaction like choking.
7. When she saw a dog, she got very scared.
8. He was terrified to go outside at night.
9. Now he’s cured of his fear of the dark.
10. You can’t control the phobia by trying to deny you feel it.
11. A phobia lasts for a long time.
12. He saw how his mother reacted to dogs and became very scared.
13. In therapy, it was revealed that he was afraid of his father.
14. If a phobia is learned, perhaps it can be unlearned.
15. Let’s talk about a fairly common kind of psychological problem.
16. Did he get over his phobia?
17. This difference is mostly important in deciding how to treat the person.
18. Phobias tend to run in families.
19. It will be easier to treat the phobia if the deeper problem is worked on as well.

Activity 3
Student A reads each sentence, Student B asks the meaning of the underlined word or phrase by saying “What does X mean?” and Student A answers “X means …” using its definition.

Activity 4
Try paraphrasing the sample sentences above and those in Vocabulary Preview A by using the definitions or any words you can think of that have a close meaning.
Lecture Organization and Signal Phrases

Introduction
I want to start the discussion by talking about a phobia. First, I’ll explain what a phobia is, and then I’ll talk about some theories.

Body: Part 1
As you probably know, a phobia is a fear.

Body: Part 2
Psychologists have come up with three characteristics of a phobia.

Body: Part 3
Let’s spend a minute going over some classifications of phobias.

Body: Part 4
Let’s turn now to the causes of phobias.

Body: Part 5
Let’s think about these two theories.

Conclusion
I’m going to stop there for today.

Supplementary Reading
The Contemporary Topics home page (http://www.longman.com/ae/skills/contemptopics/) has student resources level 2, in which you can find an interesting collection of web sites relating to the topic of Unit 3. Visit some of the web sites and learn more.