

Giftophobia and Phobias: Our Brain And the Best Gift Ever

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GiftAFeeling

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Everyone has felt that daunting feeling before giving a gift at least once. It can be described as the feeling of dread or weariness when buying gifts for others. For [example](#), have you ever given cash or a gift card instead of an actual gift? Or have you ever delegated the gift giving to someone else? Even if you dislike games such as secret Santa because there is a fear of choosing the person that is hard to buy for, these are all signs that point towards giftophobia. Keep reading to learn more about the psychology behind phobias (including giftophobia) and how to give the perfect gift every time!

Giftophobia

Though not as researched like many other phobias, giftophobia is a fear that is very relevant and affects people's lives, and consumer psychology as a whole. [Studies](#) indicate that the fear of getting it wrong is preventing you from getting it right. In other words, although giftophobia is prominent to many, it can be managed and in some cases cured. It is important to recognize giftophobia and address the issue as soon as possible, as giving bad gifts has been [shown](#) to cause negative effects in relationships. In fact, [research](#) indicates that people are becoming increasingly selective when asked about items they wish to receive. To better understand the symptoms and effects of giftophobia and how to ease the accompanying anxiety that comes with it, we first must ask; what exactly is a phobia?

Phobias - What are they?

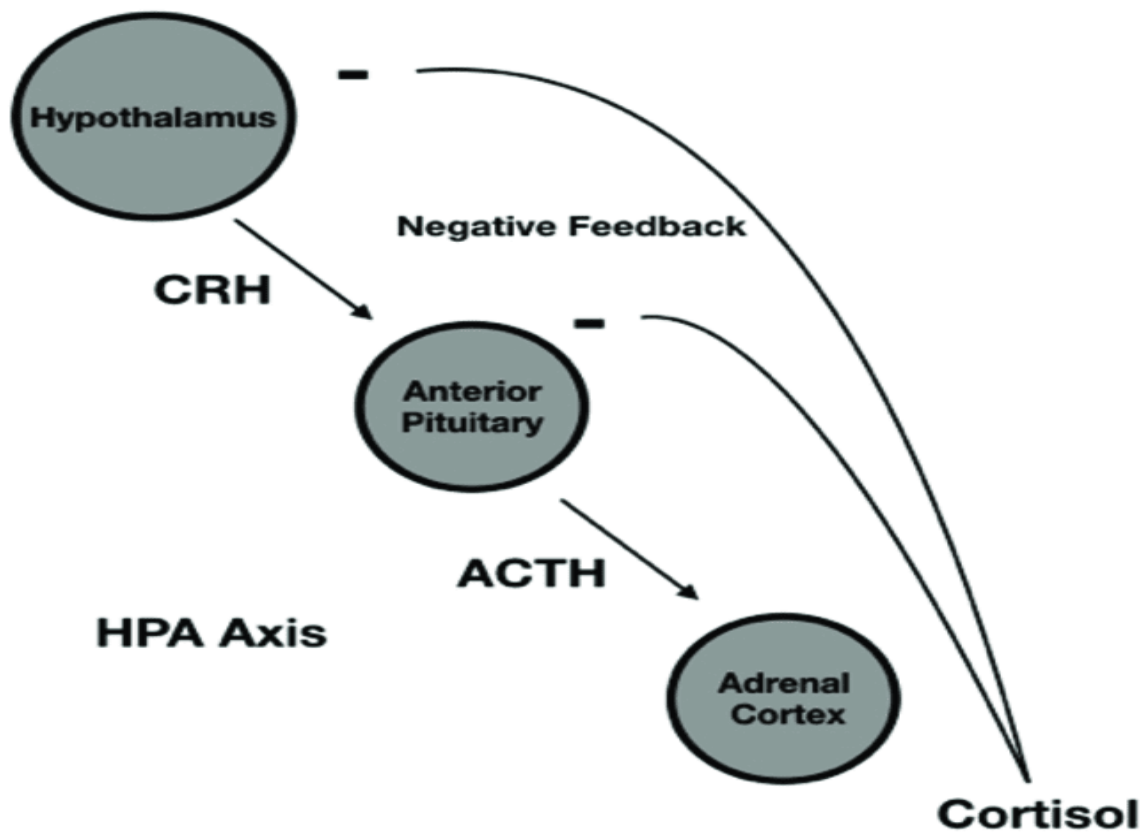
The term 'phobia' simply describes an irrational and persistent fear of a particular place or thing. The fear of the object may also be displayed as avoidance, hesitation, and other coping mechanisms to deal with the irrational anxiety that phobias cause. For example, [agoraphobia](#) is a very well-known phobia that indicates the fear of places and situations that may cause you to panic. People with this phobia will avoid places to lessen their anxiety, just as people with

giftophobia will often wait until the last minute to buy a gift, in order to avoid their anxiety until the last minute. It is also important to note that phobias can be both rational and irrational. It is also common to be conscious that their fear is abnormal and/or irrational. In fact, many people who are conscious of their irrational phobia will try to rationalize that there is a possibility of danger, in hopes of coping with the shame of their fear being irrational. This anxiety that is triggered by phobias can be very severe and debilitating, so it is important for those with phobias to either find ways to cope in hopes of easing the dread and fear they experience or find ways to soothe or weaken the fear of the object.

Phobias and the brain

To further understand this feeling, we must take a look at our brain and the science behind it. There is a small area in our brain called the [amygdala](#), which is responsible for the processing of our emotions, including stress. For people with phobias, the amygdala retrieves the object or place inappropriately, and produces our fight or flight response as a result of the extreme stress that is produced from the amygdala. These fight or flight hormones “put the body in a highly alert and stressed state” (“Phobias: Symptoms, types, causes, and treatment”, 2021). When the fight or flight hormones are activated, the amygdala can be described as the control center of the brain, and it communicates with our nervous system to produce involuntary body functions such as breathing, heart pressure, and heartbeat - which all heighten when stress hormones are produced.

To dig deeper into the science behinds phobias, continue reading to learn how and why our brains produce stress. If science isn't your thing, feel free to skip to the next section where you can learn how to give the perfect gift!



This image above may seem confusing, but this diagram describes exactly how stress is produced in our bodies. The HPA (hypothalamic pituitary adrenal) axis can be seen as the central stress response system of our bodies. It is responsible for communicating with the central nervous system as well as the endocrine system and focuses on the adaptation of our stress responses.

How it works

1. The hypothalamus releases the CRH (corticotrophin-releasing hormone) when it detects a stressful event
2. The CRF then bonds to the CRF receptors on the anterior pituitary gland, which triggers the release of ACTH (adrenocorticotrophic hormone)

3. The ACTH then bonds to the ACTH receptors on the adrenal cortex, which triggers the adrenal release of cortisol
4. Cortisol is released for several hours after experiencing the stressor and is responsible for the physical symptoms we experience in regard to stress.

Giftophobia: How to overcome it

Giftophobia differs from other phobias in the sense that stress is triggered during a situation, rather than a place or an object. Although the act of gift-giving can't be avoided, the best way to ease stress and anxiety is to find a gift that is guaranteed to be a success every time.

Personalized gifts

By giving someone a gift that is personalized to them, it shows that your gift is unique to the recipient, which makes it all the more meaningful. These aspects are very important when you consider that if the recipient does not like your gift, it might have negative effects on your relationship. On the upside, a good gift can strengthen relationships too! "Gift exchanges don't just represent interpersonal interactions, but can also represent a social function, which suggests the constitution of positive emotions that can lead to the construction of relationships and prosocial behavior" ("How to give a gift you'll both feel great about!", 2021). Whether the occasion is a holiday or a gesture of business or love, the perfect gift like a personalized one can actually benefit and strengthen social bonds over time. They can also be beneficial for your own well-being, as a guaranteed good gift will hopefully ease the stress that giftophobia can cause. With personalized gifts, you can focus less on the anxiety and procrastination, and more on enjoying the social traditions and fun that accompany giving and receiving.

Conclusion

While giftophobia is a very common and intrusive fear that can make choosing gifts for others difficult and stressful, understanding exactly how our brain processes information and reacts to our stressor can provide a sense of control and awareness about how our brains choose to stress us out. By giving the perfect gift, hopefully, it can ease some of the physical and emotional discomforts of choosing a gift and give time to focus on the individuals for who we choose to give gifts.

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