

Topics: Phobias by Adrian Tennant

LEVEL: Intermediate +
AGE: Teenagers / Adults
TIME NEEDED: 90 minutes + project
LANGUAGE FOCUS: Dependent prepositions, understanding vocabulary in context, topic words

LEAD-IN

Put students in pairs. Ask them to look at the pictures and discuss the questions. Monitor and help where necessary. Elicit ideas from students as a whole class discussion.

Key

A. a fear of buttons (*koumpounophobia*); B. a fear of heights (*acrophobia*); C. a fear of spiders (*arachnophobia*); D. a fear of confined spaces (*claustrophobia*); E. a fear of needles or injections (*trypanophobia*)

READING: LETTERS

Write the words *agony aunt* on the board and ask students if they know what it is.

Explain that it is usually someone in a magazine or newspaper (but also sometimes on the radio or television) who tries to help people with their problems. People write letters to the agony aunt who then writes back giving advice, but all the letters and responses are published in the newspaper / magazine.

Ask students to read through the four letters and fill in the gaps with one of the fears shown in the pictures. If they don't know the correct word, ask them to write down the letter of the corresponding picture. Put students in pairs and get them to check their answers together. Then check as a class.

Key a

1. needles 2. claustrophobia / a fear of confined spaces; 3. spiders; 4. buttons

Next, ask students to read the four questions and answer each one. Again, get pairs to check their answers together before checking as a class.

Key b

1. Yes. He says he can understand her fear.; 2. because she uses a wheelchair; 3. after he watched a film called

Arachnophobia; 4. because she will start school and she will be frightened of everything

After this, ask students to read through the three replies and match each one to the correct letter. Put students in pairs and get them to check their answers together. Then check as a class.

Key c

A. Mrs Jane Stewart; B. Shaun; C. Inga

Extension activity

At this stage you could ask your students to pretend to be Betty, the agony aunt, and write a response to the letter from Jonas Stensen. Or, if they disagree with any of Betty's advice, they could rewrite one of the replies.

WORKING WITH THE LANGUAGE

Focus 1: Understanding meaning

Put students in pairs and ask them to help each other in answering the seven questions. Monitor and help where necessary before checking as a class.

Key

1. his girlfriend; 2. all the employees; 3. films / movies; 4. buttons; 5. the ones which Becky suffers from, i.e. crowds, etc.; 6. people living in the UK; 7. Inga's employers

Focus 2: Language use

Ask students to read the information about dependent prepositions and look at the examples in the box. Then ask students to do the exercise but without looking back at the letters and replies. Once they have finished, get them to check their answers in pairs and look back at the letters before checking as a class.

Key

1. of; 2. about; 3. with; 4. from

WORKING WITH VOCABULARY

Focus 1: Meaning

Ask students to look back at the letters and replies and find words that match the definitions. Encourage them to work in pairs and discuss their ideas. If students are struggling, tell them that the words are in the order in which they appear in the letters and replies. Check the answers as a class.

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Key _____
1. sack; 2. crawl(s); 3. a softy; 4. get rid of; 5. at the end of your tether; 6. crowd; 7. uniform; 8. irrational; 9. hypnosis; 10. dismissal

Focus 2: Topic-related words

Next, ask students to complete the five sentences with the words in the box. Let students use dictionaries if they want to. Check the answers as a class.

Key _____
1. frightened; 2. phobic; 3. fear; 4. phobia; 5. fears

LISTENING

Ask students to listen to a short extract from a radio show and decide which of the four letters from the Reading: Letters exercise it is most closely related to.

Transcript:

Host: So on today's phone-in *We can help you!* We have Jane Stewart. Hello, Jane!

Jane: Hello.

Host: So, Jane, you seem to have a problem with your son, is that right?

Jane: Yes, Ben. He's nine and I'm almost at the end of my tether.

Host: Well, why don't you tell us more about him and we'll see if we can help you?

Jane: OK. Basically, Ben seems to have absolutely no fear and this often gets him into trouble. He'll pick up anything, loves climbing things and doesn't get frightened easily. If we turn our backs for a moment, he's jumping out of the window or doing something dangerous. Ben has already broken his arm twice, but even that hasn't stopped him!

Host: Ah! He sounds like a real handful, but I'm sure some of our listeners have had similar experiences and can give you some advice. So, over to you – the listeners – can anyone help Jane?

Key _____
letter 4

Ask students to read letter 4 and circle any differences between that and the radio show. Put students in pairs and ask them to discuss their answers together. Play the recording again, if necessary. Check the answers as a class.

Key _____
Becky / Ben; girl / boy; five / nine years old; is frightened of everything / has no fear

SPEAKING

Put students in small groups and ask them to discuss the questions together. Monitor and help where necessary. Afterwards, ask a few groups to report back on their discussion. You might want to open this out to the whole class.

PROJECT

Ask students to carry out the project for homework and present their results in the next lesson.

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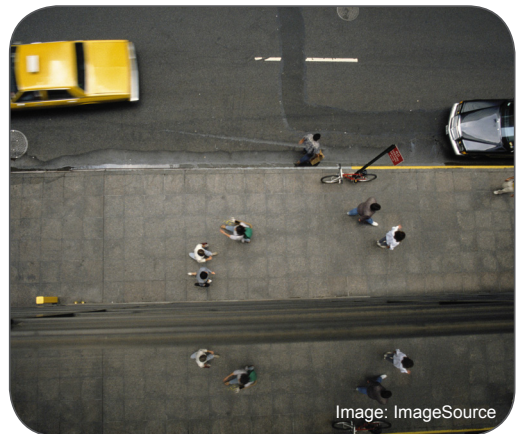
LEAD-IN

Look at the photos. What can you see? Which of these are you frightened of? How bad is your fear?

A.



B.



C.



D.



E.



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READING: LETTERS

a. Read the letters sent to an agony aunt and fill in the gaps with four of the fears shown in the pictures.



Dear Betty

1. Dear Betty,

I wonder if you could help me with a problem? Well, actually it's my girlfriend who has the problem. She's really scared of _____. I can understand the fear. I mean, who likes them? But the problem is we're about to go on holiday together and we're going to India, so we've been told we need to get them. I'm worried that if she doesn't get them then we'll have to cancel our holiday. Can you help?

Jonas Stensen

2. Dear Betty,

I was recently sacked from my job because I refused to move offices. The company I worked for decided to move us from the ground floor, where we had worked for five years, to new offices on the tenth floor. Unfortunately, I suffer from _____ and I'm too scared to get into the lift. I can't take the stairs as I use a wheelchair. I'm now at home and I'm very upset, especially as I loved my job. What can I do?

Inga

3. Dear Betty,

I'm 28 and quite a big man (I play rugby at the weekends), but I'm frightened of anything that crawls. All my friends think I'm a big softy and it's very embarrassing. The worst are _____. I'm absolutely terrified. My girlfriend has to get rid of them while I stand on a chair. I started being frightened after I saw the film *Arachnophobia* at the cinema. Now I'm careful what I go to see.

Shaun

4. Dear Betty,

I'm nearly at the end of my tether and really don't know what to do. My five-year-old daughter, Becky, is terrified of so many things it's almost impossible to take her out and both my husband and I are really worried about what will happen when she starts school later this year. She's frightened of people, crowds, open spaces and pretty much anything new. She's even frightened of _____ and there are lots of those on her new school uniform. Can you help us?

Mrs Jane Stewart

b. Read the texts again and answer these questions.

1. Is Jonas sympathetic about his girlfriend's fear?
2. Why can't Inga walk to the tenth floor?
3. When did Shaun's phobia begin?
4. Why are Becky's parents worried about what will happen in a few months time?

c. Here are three replies from Betty that offer advice. Match the replies to the correct letters.

A. _____

Some of those fears are very common and can often disappear as children get older, especially when they have more contact with people outside the family. As for the other fear you mention, it might seem irrational but there must be a reason for it. Have you thought of trying hypnosis?

B. _____

You aren't alone as around 50% of women and 20% of men suffer from this fear in the UK and you certainly shouldn't be embarrassed. Next time you see one, take a deep breath and remember that they won't do you any harm. Luckily we don't have any poisonous ones in the UK.

C. _____

The first thing to say is that they really should be considering people who have such fears. However, I think you have a very strong case for unfair dismissal, not because of your fear but on the grounds of health and safety. Have they considered what would happen if there was a fire?

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WORKING WITH THE LANGUAGE

Focus 1: Understanding meaning

Answer these questions.

1. In letter 1, Jonas Stensen writes: 'I'm worried that if she doesn't get them then we'll have to cancel our holiday'. Who is 'she'?
2. In letter 2, Inga writes: 'The company I worked for decided to move us from the ground floor ...' What does the word 'us' refer to?
3. In letter 3, Shaun writes: 'Now I'm careful what I go to see.' What's he talking about seeing?
4. In letter 4, Mrs Jane Stewart writes: '... and there are lots of those on her new school uniform.' What does the word 'those' refer to?
5. In reply A, Betty writes: 'Some of those fears are very common ...' Which fears is she talking about?
6. In reply B, Betty writes: 'Luckily we don't have any poisonous ones in the UK.' Who is the 'we' here?
7. In reply C, Betty writes: 'Have they considered what would happen if there was a fire?' Who are 'they'?

Focus 2: Language use

In English, some verbs and adjectives can only be used if they are followed by a preposition. We call these *dependent prepositions*. Look at the examples from the letters to the agony aunt:

- ... but I'm frightened of anything that crawls.
- ... because I refused to move offices.

Complete the sentences below with prepositions **WITHOUT** looking at the letters and Betty's replies.

1. She's really scared _____ needles. I can understand the fear.
2. ... both my husband and I are really worried _____ what will happen when she starts school ...
3. ... especially when they have more contact _____ people outside the family.
4. ... around 50% of women and 20% of men suffer _____ arachnophobia ...

WORKING WITH VOCABULARY

Focus 1: Meaning

Find words and phrases in the letters and replies that mean the following:

1. to tell someone they can no longer work (informal)
2. to move along close to the ground
3. someone who is very emotional, often seen as weak or silly by others (two words)
4. to remove something that is unpleasant or annoying (three words)
5. to feel very upset because you are no longer able to deal with a difficult situation (six words)
6. a large number of people in the same place
7. a set of clothes you wear to show that you go to, or work at, a particular place
8. not thinking or behaving in a clear or reasonable way
9. a very relaxed state in which you seem to be sleeping but can still react to someone else's suggestions
10. an act of making someone leave their job

Focus 2: Topic-related words

Complete the sentences with the correct word from the box.

fear fears frightened phobia phobic

1. Everyone is _____ of something.
2. It's quite common to be claustro_____.
3. Hippopotomonstrosesquipedaliophobia is the _____ of long words!
4. If you suffer from acro_____ then you are frightened of heights.
5. Most _____ can easily be explained.

LISTENING

Listen to the radio show and answer the questions below.

1. Which letter is it most closely related to?
2. What are the differences between the letter to the agony aunt and the radio show?

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Discuss these questions in small groups.

1. Do you have any phobias?
2. What are they?
3. Can you explain your phobias?
4. Do you know anyone who is frightened of something strange? What is it?
5. Rank these from 1-5. 1 = most frightening; 5 = least frightening.

spiders

heights

needles

confined spaces

crowds

PROJECT

Carry out a survey. Ask at least thirty people what phobias they have and find out which are the most common. Present your findings to the class in the next lesson.