What Is Vehophobia and How Do You Overcome It?

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When people with vehophobia get behind the wheel of a car, their heart rate immediately increases, their breathing becomes shallow, and their hands start to sweat. It's an uncomfortable feeling that can prohibit them from driving entirely. Instead, they often decide to use a ride-sharing company or just stay home. Vehophobia — fear of driving — can have a measurable impact on a sufferer's life.

What Is Vehophobia?

Vehophobia is the fear of driving. Those suffering from Vehophobia experience crippling anxiety whenever they are behind the wheel of a car. It can occur in people who have been involved in a vehicular accident and those who have not.

Even though people suffering from vehophobia can feel like they are alone, there are thousands of Americans who suffer from the condition. Those with vehophobia have a debilitating fear about some aspect of driving, but the extent of their fear varies. Some are only anxious about driving on the freeway or on particular routes, while others might not even be able to ride as a passenger in a car.

The cause of vehophobia also varies. Usually, people develop a fear of driving after being involved in an accident. In those cases, the person is most likely suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). PTSD can cause the person to feel anxious or experience flashbacks of the traumatic event. One study found that 25 to 33% of people experience PTSD at least 30 days after a motor vehicle accident. Given that there are about 6 million car accidents in the U.S. every year, it's no wonder that vehophobia is such a common condition.

Vehophobia can also be an issue for people who have not been involved in an accident. Instead, they might have witnessed a terrible accident or watched one on the news or in a movie. Regardless of the cause, there are several treatment options for those suffering with vehophobia. It's possible for them to overcome their fears and get back to living unconstrained by vehophobia.

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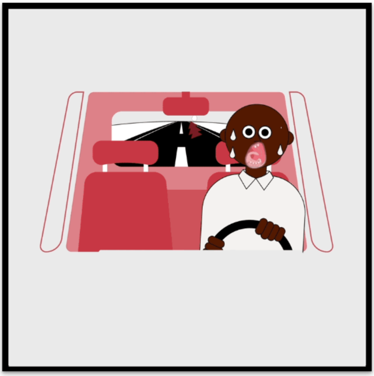
Common Symptoms of Vehophobia

It's important for those suffering from vehophobia to understand its symptoms. Then, they can identify when they are experiencing it. The symptoms of vehophobia are similar to anxiety, and include:

- Trembling
- Sweating
- Shallow breathing
- Increased heart rate
- Tense muscles
- Chest pain
- Nausea
- Excessive fear of losing control and/or getting in an accident
- Panic attacks while driving
- Always finding excuses not to drive



Causes of Vehophobia

The most common cause of vehophobia is being involved in a bad accident. If someone is involved in an accident where they almost died or thought they might die, or if another person was badly injured or killed as a result of the accident, getting behind the wheel again can be a seemingly impossible.

But, experiencing a vehicular accident is not the only reason someone might develop vehophobia. Other causes are:

- Witnessing an accident

- Growing up with parents who were always anxious in the car
- Driving in dangerous conditions, such as intense rain, snow, or wind
- Having an overly strict driving instructor
- Experiencing road rage from someone inside or outside of the car
- Seeing a big animal run in front of the car
- Reading about or watching bad accidents in the news, TV, or a movie

Someone who has a fear of driving might be triggered by any of the above situations. They can also experience increased anxiety in congested traffic or around aggressive drivers. At the same time, it's common for people with vehophobia to experience anxiety when they are driving in completely safe conditions.

People with vehophobia might also have other extreme fears, such as amaxophobia, the fear or being in and riding in a vehicle, claustrophobia, the fear of confined places with no clear exit, and hodophobia, the fear of traveling.

Treatments for Vehophobia

People with vehophobia often find work-arounds to avoid driving. They use public transportation or ride-sharing services because they are controlled by their fear. But, they don't have to live that way. There are several effective treatments for vehophobia. Below are some of the most popular treatment options.

Defensive Driving Courses: Many people fear driving because they don't feel comfortable with their driving skills, especially if they have to react quickly. Defensive driving courses teach people to be aware of other drivers and react safely to unexpected situations. These courses boost people's confidence and help erase their fears.

Therapy: Face your anxieties by enrolling in therapy. There are several types of therapy that a therapist might employ to treat vehophobia and/or PTSD, but cognitive behavioral therapy is one of the most common. This therapy helps an individual alter their thought patterns and behaviors so they can move on from their trauma and anxiety. Exposure therapy, which exposes the patient to the source of anxiety, can also help people overcome vehophobia.

Hypnotherapy: One other type of therapy used to help people with extreme fears is hypnotherapy. This treatment uses hypnosis to explore and process the thoughts and feelings associated with the painful memory. The patient is then able to confront their fear of driving.

Medication: Medication can help with debilitating anxiety, but it is not a long-term treatment. Those taking medication should also attend regular therapy sessions to help them heal from their anxiety.

Support Groups: There are support groups for people who are suffering from vehophobia. The group might meet in person or it could be an online community of people. If you want support from others who understand what you're going through, search for a group near you.

While seeking treatment for vehophobia, keep in mind that it takes time to overcome a fear of driving. Those who are undergoing treatment should take small steps, confronting the least anxiety-provoking situations first before going after their biggest driving fears.

They should also remember that it is normal to experience some setbacks. They will be able to overcome their fear if they keep following their treatment. When they get behind the wheel, they should take a few deep breaths and remind themselves that they can do it.

How to Get Legal Assistance

Experiencing anxiety and fear while driving can be detrimental to one's well being. The team at Shook & Stone understands that one bad accident can negatively impact the lives of everyone involved.

If you are experiencing vehophobia because of a car accident that you did not cause, you need to hire an experienced personal injury lawyer. Receiving treatment for your vehophobia can be costly, and you deserve to receive fair compensation to cover the expenses. The Nevada auto accident attorneys at Shook & Stone have more than 85 years of combined legal experience. Contact our team for a free consultation today. Call us at (888) 662-2013.

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