
Phobias

"Come on, Marisa!" all of the fifth graders yelled from inside the big elevators. "Hurry up, don't you want to get to the top?"

Marisa looked glum and thought to herself, "Of course I want to get to the top - that's why I came on this field trip." But when she glanced back at her friends, she felt jealous - how come none of them were terrified of riding in the elevator?

"I'm OK," she said as brightly as she could. "I'll take the stairs and meet you there." When she realized how many stairs that would be, Marisa wasn't too happy. But she breathed a sigh of relief knowing that she wouldn't have to take that scary elevator ride.

What's a Phobia?

A **phobia** (say: fo-bee-uh) is the fancy name for a fear. But a phobia isn't just any kind of fear. It's normal for kids to be afraid of things - like taking a hard test at school, passing a growling dog on the street, or hearing a huge clap of thunder.

A phobia is different because it is an extremely strong fear of a situation or thing. It is also a kind of fear that doesn't go away. A kid who has a phobia will be afraid of something every time he or she sees or experiences it. She won't just be afraid once or twice. Kids who have phobias often go out of their way to avoid the situation or thing that scares them.

That's why Marisa had to take the stairs. She has a phobia of being in closed-in spaces and was too scared to take the elevator. Sometimes, when a kid has a phobia and is forced to face what makes her scared, she may get very nervous and have a panic attack.