

## Technical sheet

# FEAR



Fear signals a potential danger that could occur in the more or less near future. Fear has an adaptive function that enables us to prepare to face danger.

### Physical sensations that accompany fear:

- Faster heartbeat
- Sweating
- Trembling
- Feeling of suffocation, lack of air, lump in the throat
- Muscular tension
- Diarrhoea, vomiting, feeling heavy in the stomach
- Wanting to urinate...

**Words that express fear:** apprehension, worry, anxiety, anguish, stage fright, fear, panic, unease, fright, dread, horror, foreboding...

Fear is a common emotion among trauma victims because the experiences are unpredictable, uncontrollable or unfamiliar.

In trauma victims, warning signals crop up in a chronic way for no particular reason. This can be explained by the fact that multiple stimuli may evoke the trauma and trigger anxiety.

Chronic anxious apprehension is exhausting. It's as if you were pushing down on the accelerator and the brake at the same time. The person is ready to start, but their initiative is constantly held back. In the absence of action, the fear persists until exhaustion sets in.

Effective fear management involves reducing physiological over-activity (breathing), evaluating thoughts (I'm safe here) and choosing behaviours.

One of the therapeutic objectives, the antidote to anxiety, is to replace the emotions of despair and uncertainty with competence and confidence.

### Behaviours generated by fear

When faced with fear, we can react in all sorts of ways: some of them are appropriate and useful, while others are unhelpful or ineffective.

Some of these behaviours include:

- Avoidance: sometimes it's the best solution, but this behaviour, which seems effective in the short term, often exacerbates fear in the long term. It's by facing up to what frightens us, not avoiding it, that we can reduce our fears more effectively;
- Eating behaviours: snacking, binge eating or bulimia may reduce the fear in the short term, but the fear will come back later and will be exacerbated by the consequences of these eating behaviours.

## How can I manage my fear?

- I observe how I feel with full awareness, note my physical sensations.
- I name my emotion of fear precisely and with nuance.
- I accept it and let go. This is my experience at the time, because it's what I really need to know. If I try to control my emotion rather than experience it, I'll be in pain later, it's too risky!
- Emotions are generally of limited duration. I don't try to make my fear disappear, I stay with it! I find that after a while, my fear will naturally disappear or subside.
- I fill in my emotional self-observation booklet.
- I treat myself with compassion.
- I don't judge my emotions.
- I treat myself with indulgence, as I would treat my best friend.
- I imagine myself facing up to a situation in which I'm afraid. I see the situation ending successfully.
- I visualise blue for calm and drive out red.
- I accept help and comfort.
- I look for reassuring external elements. I avoid avoiding if possible!