INTER – FEAR
(ROOTING THE CAUSES OF ARITHMOPHOBIA)
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Every one of us has their own fear; something that frightens us the most. It may be the fear of falling in love, insects, needles, heights, holes, dusts, animals, and many more. There are also phobias that seem to be weird when you hear that there’s a term/fear like that. As an example, do you know someone who is scared of numbers, especially mathematical computations? It seems to be unfamiliar but yes, it does exist.

Arithmophobia or numerophobia, as defined by psychologists, is the exaggerated constant and often irrational fear of numbers. These words have both Latin/Greek origins where the root word stands for numbers. In addition, “phobos” is a Greek word for “deep aversion or fear.”

Did you know that there are phobias that are linked to arithmophobia? These phobia are the more specific type of phobia. Here are some of these numerophobias. Triskaidekaphobia, tredecaphobia, or tridecaphobia is the phobia of the number thirteen. Tetraphobia is the phobia of number four. The fear of number is eight is called octophobia while the fear of number 666 is also known as Hexakosioihexekontahexaphobia. Others are also frightened with number 17 and that is called heptakaidekaphobia. These numbers are said to symbolize bad luck, death etc.

There are some reasons that trigger someone to have these conditions. Some of these reasons can be genetically, experiences and many more. Now, let me discuss these reasons for you to be informed and knowledgeable with this situation. You can also know if you have this kind of fear.

Some phobic (the people who have phobia) suffer extreme anxiety on several numbers. The 13th number is highly feared. There is a strong belief that it is an unlucky number, some building have omitted floors and apartment number 13. In religion, the number 13 has been associated to Judas being the 13th person to sit at the table.
According to studies, in some East and Southern East Asian countries, the number four is feared. Similar to number 13, this phobia is taken so seriously, that some buildings have omitted floors and apartment number four. In China, the number is feared as well in Mandarin, the pronunciation of the word four is a homophone to that of the word for death.

Fear of number 17, on the other hand, is common in Italy because in Roman digits it is written as XVII. Wherein we can arrange it into VIXI which is a Latin word that means “I have lived” however, this could be a euphemism for “I am dead.”

In general, arithmophobia’s causes have roots in universal beginnings when man first started keeping time, maintaining calendars and using numerical systems. Egyptian’s for example, measure time through the use of solar calendar. While other cultures used lunar calendars. That belief has stopped when the concept of zero was introduced by a Hindu scholar named Aryabhatta. This further gave rise to the fact that numbers are infinite or never ending. Gradually, emphasizes that numbers and time were complex, unknown, varying and often difficult to deal with that’s why others are avoiding it.

Other phobias have their origin in traumatic events. Similarly, the root cause of arithmophobia might also lie in one’s negative experiences. Doing poorly or failing in Math at school could lead to a permanent fear of numbers. In addition, reports say having been the subject of ridicule, being spanked, scolded, bullied for not having done well in math exam could also trigger numerophobia. Parents might unknowingly instill the fear of numbers in children. Statements like: “Math is hard, you will fail if you do not study” can also cause a child to fear numbers.

Hereditary, genetic factors and brain chemistry can sometimes lead to this phobia. According to Gray (2013), memories can be passed down to later generations through genetic switches that allow offspring to inherit the experience of their ancestors. Scientists have long assumed that memories and learned experiences built up during a lifetime must be passed on by teaching later generations or through personal experience. However, new research has shown that it is possible for some information to be inherited biologically through chemical changes that occur in DNA.
Also, as stated before, specific number phobias like the fear of number 13 or 666 etc. could be fueled by cultural or religious beliefs or even TV shows and movies about them. The best example is the movie “Friday the 13th.”

Now that you have learned the causes of arithmophobia and numerophobia, you can now help not only for yourself but also to others who experience these causes. Remember, “Prevention is better than Cure.”

REFERENCE

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