

## Safety Behaviors

↳ Safety behaviors are actions conducted with the intention of preventing a feared catastrophe, in the short term they often give a sense of relief, but in the long term they are unhelpful because they prevent the disconfirmation of the belief that one is in danger

### What is a catastrophic belief?

Catastrophic beliefs are usually, but not always, about different kinds of threats to the individual, for example:

- Physical threat - "I'll be killed" "I'll be hurt"
- Psychological threat - "I'll go mad" / "I can't cope"
- Social threat - "I'll embarrass myself and never be able to clean my face again" / "They will look for an idiot"

### What types of safety behaviors are there?

There are three types of safety behaviors:

1. Avoidance - e.g. refusing to go back to a location
2. Dodge - e.g. leaving a feared situation
3. Safety behaviors, which are visible things one does to decrease one's risk
  - distraction - wanting to my head to keep panic to stop myself from progressing
  - clenching my breathing - otherwise I'll be overwhelmed by my fear and lose control
  - bracing my feet - in case someone picks me up and I'm hurt

### What are the effects of safety behavior?

- Don't seem to be doing less safety behavior leads to a reduction in anxiety, long term avoidance or avoidance is often accompanied by a powerful negative belief. Perhaps powerful negative beliefs are, and even an individual has learned that safety behaviors lead to relief they're likely to use again.
- Long term in the long term, safety behaviors act to maintain anxiety by preventing the disconfirmation of unhelpful beliefs. For example, if someone has the belief "dogs will attack me and bite my feet" and avoids dogs they don't get the opportunity to learn that most dogs are friendly, or fail to learn the difference between friendly and unfriendly dogs.
- Catastrophic/unhelpful safety behaviors often have unintended consequences which can reinforce the original belief, make the anxiety worse, or lead to other problems.

Early experience	Belief	Safety behavior	Consequences		
			Short term	Long term	Unintended
Humiliated at school about appearance	"I might worry people they will think I'm disgusting and repulsive"	Keep away from my class	Reduction anxiety because no-one noticed my absence	People avoid me because I'm not in class	Worry about my appearance might be back over time
Physically assaulted by a group of boys while walking home	"People are dangerous, I'll be in real danger if I walk to school"	Avoidance and bracing the neck	Feel slightly safer when present (short)	Believe them that avoiders who not generally help feeling attacked	Worry them that someone
Wrote a letter to a friend about a problem they're experiencing at school	"She will think my friend, it will look incredibly stupid if she sees that I've written to her"	Control my face and refuse to write anything	Feel good to be writing a letter to her (short)	People avoid me because they think I'm a problem to an extent	Someone who had experience had better avoided situation

### What is the difference between a safety behavior and an adaptive behavior?

↳ In my feelings & the belief on them, there is no way of telling the difference between unhelpful safety behaviors and helpful adaptive behaviors. It is the intention that matters - safety behaviors are those which are intended to create fear of a technique. For example, if the strategy of distraction is used to cope with a painful experience such as a visit to the dentist we say it's helpful. However, if distraction is used with the intention of preventing a catastrophe such as avoiding feelings of panic the first will make us go back there; can be regarded as unhelpful safety behavior.