Agoraphobia is a type of anxiety disorder in which you fear and often avoid places or situations that might cause you to panic and make you feel trapped, helpless or embarrassed.

With agoraphobia, you fear an actual or anticipated situation, such as using public transportation, being in open or enclosed spaces, standing in line or being in a crowd. The anxiety is caused by fear that there’s no easy way to escape or seek help if intense anxiety develops. Most people who have agoraphobia develop it after having one or more panic attacks, causing them to fear another attack and avoid the place where it occurred.

People with agoraphobia often have a hard time feeling safe in any public place, especially where crowds gather. You may feel that you need a companion, such as a relative or friend, to go with you to public places. The fears can be so overwhelming that you may feel unable to leave your home.

Agoraphobia treatment can be challenging because it usually means confronting your fears. But with talk therapy (psychotherapy) and medications, you can escape the trap of agoraphobia and live a more enjoyable life.