

FACTSHEET

Coping with feeling **FRIGHTENED**

Experiencing anti-social behaviour can be very frightening. Here are some practical tips to help you cope with that fear.

Feeling frightened inside your home?

Fear can make you a prisoner in your own home and stop you leading a happy and enjoyable life. Here are some simple things you can do to help you feel less frightened. Take control and choose to believe you will be fine.

1. Lock all doors and windows (double-check them to reassure yourself).
2. Go through your home, especially after visitors, to make sure everything is as it should be.
3. If you have had threats or there is a history of something being put through your letterbox, you could try to seal it during the night so it cannot be opened.
4. Make sure your home is well lit and light switches are easy to find. The right lighting can make a big difference to comfort and emotional wellbeing.
5. Identify sounds so that you can quickly recognise them, for example a car door shutting, a dripping tap, the lift in a block of flats etc. This will help you be less nervous when you hear a noise if you know what it is.
6. Close your curtains, blinds and interior doors at night, as this will add to your feeling of security.
7. Make sure you have a telephone near you.
8. Use an answer machine to screen unwanted calls and only talk to the people you want to. Answer the phone by saying 'hello' – don't give your name or number – and try to keep calm and not show emotion, even if receiving an unpleasant call, as many callers will give up if they don't think they are upsetting you.
9. Act calmly if you hear banging on your windows or knocking on your door. Only answer the door if you are expecting someone. Consider having a chain and peephole fitted. With a peephole you can see who is there, but they cannot see you.
10. Take your mind off your fear by doing something else, such as reading or calling a friend.
11. Breathe deeply and try to relax.

There are helplines set up specifically to provide emotional support – you may want to contact The Samaritans <http://www.samaritans.org/> for telephone support. Call 116 123 for free.

Victim Support is another charity that may be able to help with emotional support as well as practical support in your local area: <http://www.victimsupport.org.uk/>. Call 0808 168 9111 for free.

FACTSHEET

Feeling frightened outside your home?

Anti-social behaviour can make you frightened to leave your home. If it is your neighbours who are making your life a misery, you may be scared to return home. If anti-social behaviour is affecting you in a public place then you may be scared to go through that park, get on that bus, or go to your local shops.

Where anti-social behaviour is targeted at you, the perpetrator will be delighted to know you are frightened. Don't give them that satisfaction. Take control of your fear. Here are some ways how:

1. Get to know your neighbours (the non-antisocial ones!). This will give you potential support if they are suffering from the same ASB. You can find strength sharing your story and are more likely to get fast results if there are a few of you complaining. It also gives you someone to turn to at difficult times.
2. Take a mobile telephone with you when you go out.
3. Carry a personal attack alarm and learn how to use it.
4. Try to change your daily routines, ask friends to go with you whenever possible and always let someone know what your plans are.

Where possible, take alternative routes so you do not need to pass the people causing you distress. Unfortunately this is not always possible. You will therefore need a way to face that fear and anxiety.

One particularly helpful technique is called 'desensitisation'. You start with imagining yourself going through the fearful situation (e.g. walking up the driveway to the bus stop past the problem neighbours) and use relaxation strategies that replace the fear and worry with calm. Once you can successfully manage your anxiety while imagining fearful events, you can use the technique in real-life situations. Over time you become desensitised to the issues causing you fear (this can also work with phobias such as needles, fear of flying etc.).

Managing your fear in the moment

You suddenly see the group of youths, or the stalker. How can you manage the fear that threatens to overcome you?

1. Take deep full breaths and relax each part of your body, starting with your shoulders and working your way down to your feet.
2. Now assess the situation. Is it simply anxiety or is there actually something going on? Report it if there is anti-social behaviour or a crime happening.
3. Do not retaliate and do not show fear, but simply walk past with purpose. Calm down, think of a happy place and say to yourself, "I am not afraid".
4. As soon as you can, write down what you are scared of. This helps you name your fears and makes it easier to let them go. (Writing down details will also help build up evidence of anti-social behaviour.)
5. Tell someone how afraid you are, perhaps a trusted friend or family member. Talking to someone can help simply through making a connection, and they may also help put your fears to rest.