

## DEAR BETTY

1. Dear Betty,

I wonder if you could help me with a problem? Well, actually it's my girlfriend who has the problem. She's really scared of .... I can understand the fear. I mean, who likes them? But the problem is we're about to go on holiday together and we're going to India, so we've been told we need to get them. I'm worried that if she doesn't get them then we'll have to cancel our holiday. Can you help?

Jonas Stensen

2. Dear Betty,

I was recently sacked from my job because I refused to move offices. The company I worked for decided to move us from the ground floor, where we had worked for five years, to new offices on the tenth floor. Unfortunately, I suffer from .... and I'm too scared to get into the lift. I can't take the stairs as I use a wheelchair. I'm now at home and I'm very upset, especially as I loved my job. What can I do?

Inga

3. Dear Betty,

I'm 28 and quite a big man (I play rugby at the weekends), but I'm frightened of anything that crawls. All my friends think I'm big softy and it's very embarrassing. The worst are .... – I'm absolutely terrified. My girlfriend has to get rid of them while I stand on a chair. I started being frightened after I saw the film Arachnophobia at the cinema. Now I'm careful what I go to see.

Shaun

4. Dear Betty,

I'm nearly at the end of my tether and really don't know what to do. My five-year-old daughter, Becky, is terrified of so many things it's almost impossible to take her out and both my husband and I are really worried about what will happen when she starts school later this year. She's frightened of people, crowds, open spaces and pretty much anything new. She's even frightened of ... and there are lots of those on her new school uniform. Can you help us?

Mrs Jane Stewart

a. Read the texts and answer these questions.

1. Is Jonas sympathetic about his girlfriend's fear?
2. Why can't Inga walk to the tenth floor?
3. When did Shaun's phobia begin?
4. Why are Becky's parents worried about what will happen in a few months time?

b. Here are three replies from Betty that offer advice. Match the replies to the correct letters.

A. Some of those fears are very common and can often disappear as children get older, especially when they have more contact with people outside the family. As for the other fear you mention, it might seem irrational but there must be a reason for it. Have you thought of trying hypnosis?

B. You aren't alone as around 50% of women and 20% of men suffer from this fear in the UK and you certainly shouldn't be embarrassed. Next time you see one, take a deep breath and remember that they won't do you any harm. Luckily, we don't have any poisonous ones in the UK.

C. The first thing to say is that they really should be considering people who have such fears. However, I think you have a very strong case for unfair dismissal, not because of your fear but on the grounds of health and safety. Have they considered what would happen if there was a fire?

c. Answer these questions.

1. In letter 1, Jonas Stensen writes: 'I'm worried that if she doesn't get them then we'll have to cancel our holiday'. Who is 'she'?

2. In letter 2, Inga writes: 'The company I worked for decided to move us from the ground floor...' What does the word 'us' refer to?

3. In letter 3, Shaun writes: 'Now I'm careful what I go to see.' What's he talking about seeing?

4. In letter 4, Mrs Jane Stewart writes: '... and there are lots of those on her new school uniform.' What does the word 'those' refer to?

5. In reply A, Betty writes: 'Some of those fears are very common...' Which fears is she talking about?

6. In reply B, Betty writes: 'Luckily we don't have any poisonous ones in the UK.' Who is the 'we' here?

7. In reply C, Betty writes: 'Have they considered what would happen if there was a fire?' Who are 'they'?