

# **Santa and Clowns – Fear or Fun**

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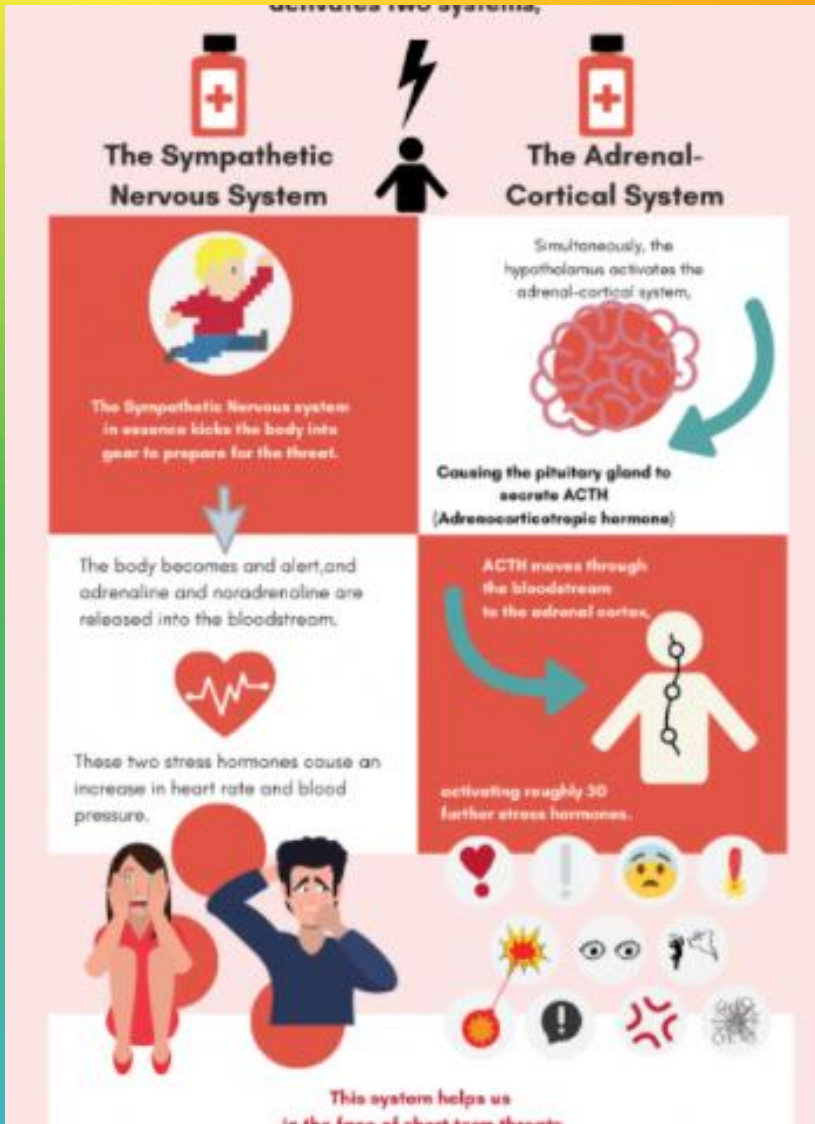




# The Fearful Child

Contributing factors:

- Genetics - more sensitive and emotional
- An anxious parent
- Overprotective parenting - dependent child may be more likely to feel anxious
- Stressful events - parental separation and trauma



# The Science of Fear

[Source](#)

# Common Fears

## Babies

- + Separation anxiety 6months +
- + Help them get to know other people from the safety of your lap
- + Announce when you are leaving and returning to the room
- + Don't let them cry it out
- + Reassure them with a calm and confident expression

## Toddlers

- + Fear of being overwhelmed by big emotions eg anger
- + Limited understanding of size like gaps, plugs, toilets
- + Help them get used to a fear slowly, and talk about the fear, don't confront the fear

## School Age

- + Fears grow from fears of the dark or death to ghosts and monsters
- + Validate and talk it through, offering information slowly and gently, giving them control eg look at pictures of dogs before looking at a tied up dog
- + Daily routines help provide stability and security

# Santaphobia



- Strange man that watches your behaviour all year round and breaks into your house
- Strange man that parents hand the child over to
- Fear of strangers develops at 6months+
- Predominantly affects children under 5 who can't communicate their fears clearly by covering their eyes or plugging their ears
- 50% learn the truth from someone who is not a parent

## Solutions

- Introduce Santa at quieter times of the year
- Give your child control over saying no to things they don't like, such as a photo with Santa or how they meet with relatives (eg kiss, cuddle or handshake)
- Respect and acknowledge their fear
- Introduce other coping mechanisms
- Approach things thoughtfully eg presents in cubby house or shed, rather than allowing a "stranger" into the house
- Ask the children what is important for them at Christmas - what they want might surprise you eg McDonalds
- Ask questions around 9-10yo about whether Santa is real - decide what and how you want to tell them



Source: Choosi & Coredata Home Fears Survey November 2018 - n= 1000 **choosi**

# Break- Ins Increase

Source

# Coulrophobia

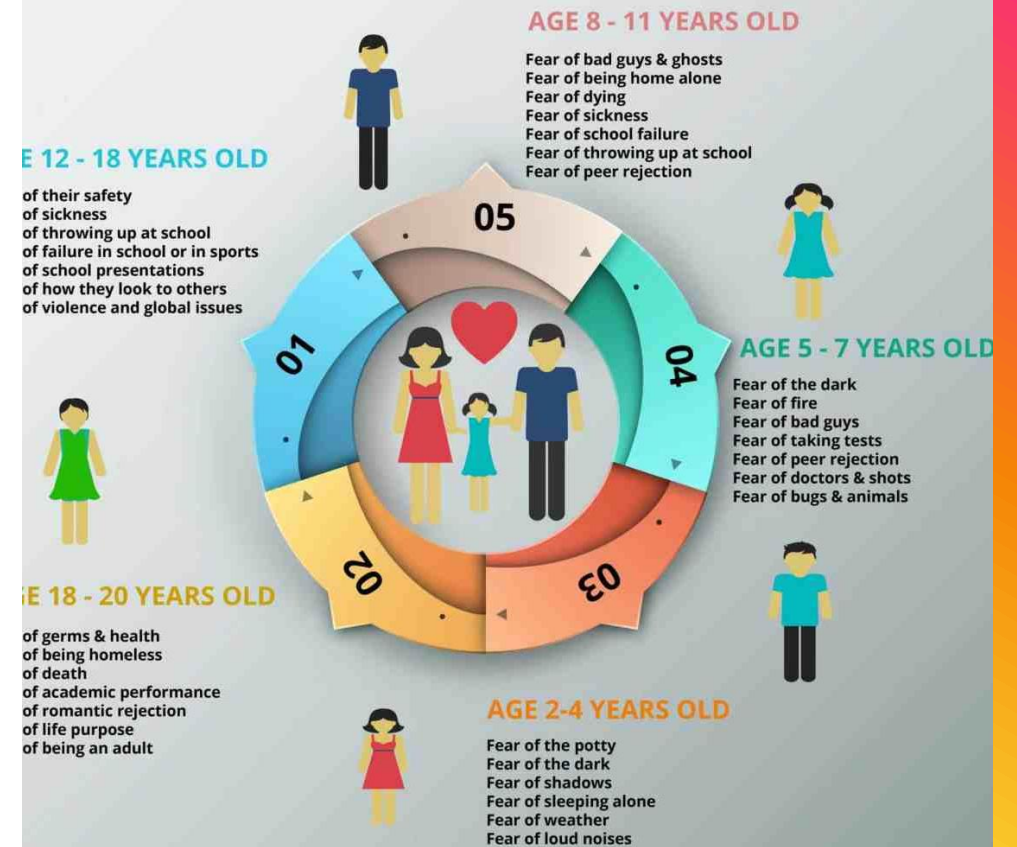


- Fear of clowns in person or in pictures
- Fear colorful makeup where facial features are disguised and distorted
- Associated with feelings of distrust and mixed feelings: can be exacerbated due to trauma
- Other symptoms: sweating, nausea, trembling, pale skin, fast breathing and heart rate, feeling terrorized
- Try to avoid exposure: birthday parties, Halloween, circus, fairs, fast food, TV, billboards
- Affects children as young as 3
- Affects more females
- Reported to affect up to 8% of people
- May affect quality of life and require exposure therapy, psychotherapy to talk therapy and CBT
- Breathing and relaxation techniques may help
- Anti Anxiety medication may help in situations like Halloween

# Top Fears

Source

## Child Therapist's List of Top Worries by Age







## Resources

[Raising Children](#)

[Better Health](#)

[Coulrophobia](#)

[Santaphobia](#)

[Podcast Regulated Relational  
Holiday Hangups](#)