MENTAL HEALTH

Overcoming fear of panic attacks

IN OUR last article, we briefly mentioned agoraphobia. Agoraphobia is not actually a fear of open spaces, but more a fear of experiencing a panic attack in situations where it may be difficult to escape or where help might not be at hand in case of an attack.

Situations that individuals tend to avoid include public transport, driving in heavy traffic, crowded places, large shopping centres, flying, cinemas or theatres, being away from home, being alone, to name a few.

In many instances, the individual hasn’t actually had a panic attack in that situation, but fears they might.

As a result, the person avoids the situation ‘just in case’.

The avoidance can be incapacitating for some people.

Cognitive behavioural treatment focuses on not just overcoming the fear of the panic, but also the situations in which panic may be feared to occur.

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