

Technophobia

by Katherine Billsborough

Technophobia – What?

Technophobe: Someone who does not like, trust, or want to use technology, especially computers. (Macmillan English Dictionary)

Technophobia is not a new term and technophobes have existed since the Industrial Revolution and probably for a lot longer in some shape or form. Today we are living in the Age of Technology. Things that were once deemed Science Fiction are becoming a reality. We either accept these changes and move with the times or we resist and become technophobes.

Technophobia - Why?

The reality is much simpler than saying that technophobes fear technological advance. Technophobes are anxious because the environment in which they live and work is changing. Most phobias are expressed by a strong physical reaction. People who are claustrophobic suffer palpitations and anxiety attacks when they are enclosed in a small area. An agoraphobic suffers in a similar way if they are exposed to the great outdoors. Technophobes, on the other hand, experience milder symptoms. They suffer feelings of self doubt and anxiety. They often feel insecure and obsolete. Some worry that they will lose their job because they cannot keep up with the times. In more extreme cases, technophobes convince themselves that technology will take over the world or that humans will be controlled by computers and robots. At other times they are afraid that if they press the wrong button on their keyboard, the computer will explode.

Technophobia - Who?

In most cases technophobes belong to older generations who were not brought up playing with computer games and mobile phones. They have never sent a text message or heard of an i-pod. Not only do they not possess a DVD, they still have not worked out how to use their VHS. These examples seem to validate the old saying; "You can't teach a dog old tricks". It is understandable that technophobia exists. Experts in the field of technology are becoming younger and younger. Being taught by somebody who is young enough to be your grandson goes against the laws of nature. Traditionally information and knowledge has been passed down from older generations to younger generations. Young people were taught to respect their elders in part because of the knowledge they possess. If this system is turned upside down, then what happens to the respect for our elders?

Technophobia - The answer

If ignorance is, in most cases, the cause of technophobia, then it follows that knowledge and learning is the way to rectify the situation. What technophobes need is information. Simple computer classes often prove highly successful, especially where the student groups are made up of peer groups; like-minded people of a similar age who are willing to learn but who have no desire to be patronised by fellow students who are twenty years younger and possibly quicker on the up-take. It is equally important that groups of technophobes who have decided "to give it a go" have an appropriate teacher; somebody as similar as possible as themselves in age. Somebody who will send out a message that says "If I can do it, then so can you".