Overcome your fear of heights

By K. ANURADHA

IF YOU have a fear of heights, head for Menara Kuala Lumpur this Saturday where a seminar, *Your Heightness*, might solve your "high" problem.

Conducted by Hypno Station, a Brickfields-based company that provides hypnotherapy services, and hosted by co-sponsor Menara Kuala Lumpur Sdn Bhd, the free seminar is targeted at tbose whose fear of heights inhibit their lifestyle.

You might finally be able to climb a ladder comfortably, live in an apartment with a marvellous view, or start flying without experiencing any intense fear.

The seminar uses advanced mind techniques to help participants cope with their fear of heights.

"We all have fears, but they are not necessarily strong enough to cause us problems. Snakes, spiders, high places and public speaking make many people uncomfortable," said Julian Leicester, a qualified hypnotherapist trained in London

For some, these objects and settings can cause overwhelming fear and apprehension - a reaction defined as a phobia.

"Phobias are fears which are excessive compared with the reactions most people may have to the same object or in the same situation," Leicester explained.

"If a fear of something is so strong that you will do nearly anything to try and avoid it, it may be a phobia."

Common phobias include fear of blood, confined spaces, flying, and eating in public. Simple phobias are distinguished from panic attacks, which involve a "fight or flight" reaction and can occur out of the blue.

Acrophobia is a fear of heights and is a type of phobia more closely associated with panic.

The causes of phobias are varied, Leicester said. Some phobias begin during childhood and may be linked to a vivid memory or experience.

Other fears are cultural, such as avoiding black cats, walking under ladders, or the number 13.



Leicester and Velerie Austin will be conducting the acrophobia seminar.

"Dealing with a phobia can vary according to a person's lifestyle and type of phobia. Some are able to deal with their condition by simply avoiding the objects or situations they fear.

"Thus, some people who are afraid of flying simply choose other means of transportation. Some young people may outgrow their phobias with time," Leicester said.

Yet, if feelings become extreme and alter your lifestyle, he recommended seeking help from a qualified consultant hypnotherapist, a specialised medical practitioner or a psychologist.

There are several options for treating phobias, Leicester said. One was to help people desensitise themselves to their phobia, beginning with mental imagery.

Support groups are another way to overcome phobias. Public speaking groups, for example, allow people with similar phobias to help one another deal with their fears.

In some cases, medication is used to help people deal with their phobias, especially if they are social phobias like eating or speaking in public.

"Hypnotherapy offers the gentle way out with a high success rate. Its strategies are geared for the subconscious, not for the conscious," Leicester said.

By using regression, a technique that brings forward a forgotten memory from the past, could help deal with the phobic attitude, resulting in a change in behaviour. Once the behaviour changes, the phobia is cleared.

Gradual exposure, along with discussion and challenges to the negative cognitions attached to heights, is the preferred treatment for acrophobia.

A person is encouraged to gradually undertake tests at a reasonably high place and to report on the experience, which challenges the previous negative beliefs.

The seminar is free for anyone who is afraid of heights. There is limited seating so only short-listed candidates will be notified.

To register, call 03-2260 2202 or register at *www.hypno-station.com*