

## EXPOSURE THERAPY

Exposure therapy is designed to help you to:

- Conquer your fears & anxieties by *gradually facing up to them*
- *Learn through your own experiences* that your anxiety will decrease overtime
- Learn that *what you are afraid will happen usually doesn't* or
- At the very least *is not as bad as you think it will be.*

**Exposure therapy can be very challenging to do but its benefits can be life changing.**

### Getting ready to do exposure therapy

1. List all of the situations, people, places, activities, objects, thoughts, physical sensations & feelings that are a strong trigger of anxiety for you &/or you avoid because of this anxiety.
2. For each item rate how much anxiety it generates on a scale of 1 to 100 where 1=no anxiety at all to 100=total anxiety.
3. Rank the items from least anxiety provoking to most anxiety provoking.
4. Try & make sure that you have a gradual & equal increase in anxiety from item to item (e.g. answering the phone=10; checking the mail box=20; going to the supermarket=30; talking to a stranger=40; getting an injection=50; going to the top floor of a tall building=60; feeling your heart race=70; walking a banana on a string=80; feeling faint=90; thinking you are going to vomit=100). *Use as many tasks as you need to ensure you gradually face up to your fears.*
5. For each item you may want to fill out the **Behavioural Experiments** worksheet so you can test your anxious predictions.

### Completing each exposure task

1. Start with the first exposure task which will be your least anxiety provoking task on your list.
2. Rate how anxious you feel as you complete the exposure task on a scale of 1 to 100 where 1=no anxiety at all & 100=total anxiety.
3. In attempting each task make sure you *prolong the exposure* (i.e. stay in the situation) until your anxiety starts to decrease by at least half, but preferably until you no longer feel any anxiety e.g. if your anxiety rating is 60 as you attempt your exposure task then don't stop your exposure task until your anxiety has at least reduced to 30,
4. Repeat the exposure task as many times as necessary until it no longer causes you to feel anxious.
5. Once you have conquered your first exposure task, move onto the next task on your exposure hierarchy & continue as above.

### After you have completed each exposure task

1. Record how anxious you felt during the task after 5 minutes; 10 minutes; 15 minutes; 20 minutes etc. until the task was completed
2. Do this each time you complete an exposure task.

Situations; People; Places; Objects; Thoughts; Physical Sensations; Feelings	Anxiety rating (0 to 100)	Rank

Exposure task	Anxiety before	Anxiety after 5 minutes	Anxiety after 10 minutes	Anxiety after 15 minutes	Anxiety after 20 minutes