

# Life Expansion

## Imaginal Exposure

Approach in same way as in vivo: rationale, feared consequences, linked to values

Primary imaginal exposure – exposure to fear-evoking thoughts aided by written or recorded verbal material

Secondary imaginal exposure – visualising feared consequences of not performing rituals

Preliminary exposure – imagining the contact with feared stimuli before engaging in in vivo exposure

## Interoceptive Exposure

Less distressing bodily sensations should be targets before highly frightening ones.

Primary interoceptive exposure – feared bodily sensations are deliberately provoked and maintained repeatedly in the therapy session and for homework

Secondary interoceptive exposure – provoking feared sensations by contacting other triggers that are avoided because they trigger sensations.

## In Vivo / Situational Exposure

Each hierarchy item should have an identified rationale & target a feared consequence [& linked to values]

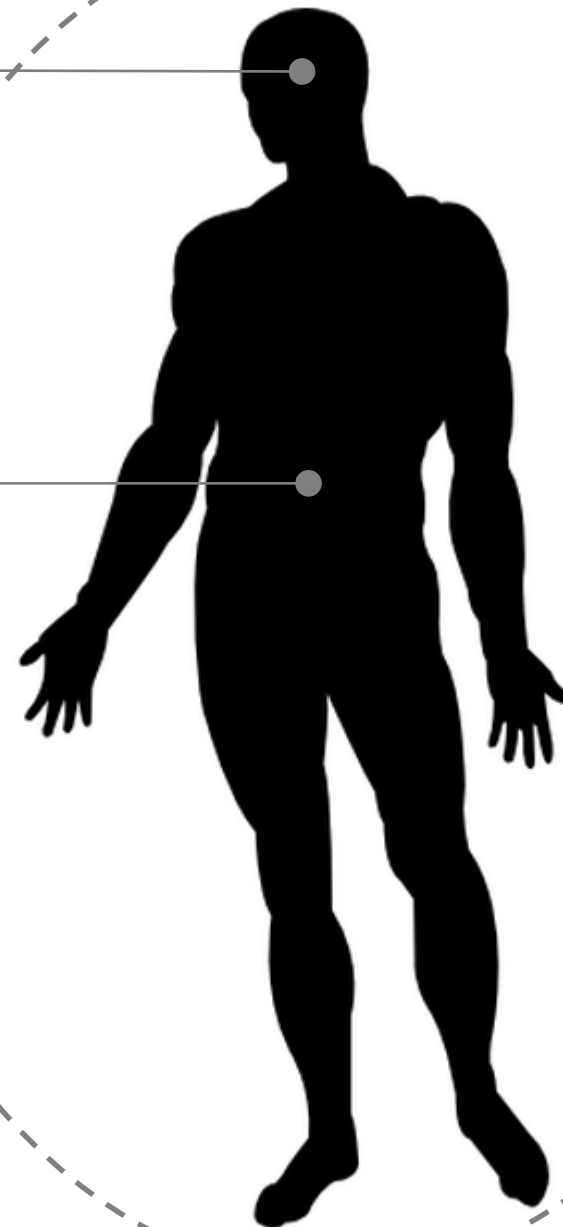
Choose items that represent an acceptable level of risk

Consider using a **graded** approach that begins with moderately distressing items. However, also include the **worst** fear in the hierarchy

Likely to involve “out of office” exposure sessions

Therapist may need to specify hierarchy items more tightly than initially discussed.

Comfort Zone



# Conducting a Functional Behavioural Assessment

Gain the client's **problem list**.

**Background and medical history** [including history of psychological therapies for problem]

## **Historical course of the problem and significant events**

Personal and family history of anxiety

Other events (e.g., media reports, illness outbreaks) that may have been possible triggers of the current problems

Present a rationale to the client on seeking to understand the way that anxiety controls and limits their choices and actions. Do this with **some recent examples**.

### **For each example (Antecedents – Behaviour – Consequences)**

What was happening when the episode began?

Was there a specific trigger? If so, what was it?

How long did the anxiety last?

What thoughts were going through your mind?

What did you do? [what did others do?]

Did you attempt to reduce anxiety or escape from the feared situation?

- What effect did these actions have on your anxiety, what happened next?

How did the situation finally resolve itself and how did you feel afterwards?

[how did others respond?] [what did this episode cost you in terms of "what matters"??]

## **Fear Cues**

External/ environmental situations and stimuli

Internal triggers: bodily signs, sensations

Intrusive thoughts, ideas, doubts, images and memories

## **Feared Consequences of Exposure to Fear Cues**

Overestimates of the likelihood and severity of danger

Intolerance of uncertainty

Beliefs about experiencing anxiety

## **Safety Seeking Behaviours**

Passive avoidance

Checking and reassurance seeking

Compulsive Rituals and brief/ covert / mental rituals

Safety signals

Beliefs about power of safety behaviours to prevent feared consequences

Provide client with rationale to engage in **self-monitoring**

*Adapted from Abramowitz, Deacon & Whiteside (2011). Exposure therapy for anxiety: Principles & practice. Guilford Press.*

# EXERCISE: Noticing Your Own Unwillingness

In your struggle with anxiety what have you noticed about your life - have the efforts to control and stop your unwanted experiences allowed you to be free of fear? Or have they ended up making it worse?

*Think back over the past few weeks to moments where you have experienced strong fear and anxiety. Consider what happened before this emotion: what was the triggering event? Then, what happened after? Did you find yourself engaging in unhelpful avoidance that took you away from what is important to you? Or did you use your Open, Aware and Active skills to stay on track with your values? It would help to reflect on several situations where you experienced fear, anxiety or worry.*

**What was the situation?**

**What were your Responses (emotions, thoughts, sensations, urges)? How willing were you to experience fear and anxiety (0 - not at all, through to 10, completely willing)?**

**What did you do? Did this move you away from your Values (Avoidance) or towards your Values?**

# Noticing and Evaluating Worksheet

When you try out something new, we'd like you to take some time to make a note of how it went. Make a record of how you felt before you did the activity and then how you felt afterwards. Just give a rough estimate – it doesn't have to be perfect.

Date	Situation	How did you feel before?	New behaviour	How did you feel after?

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# How to be an Awesome ERP Coach, in 10 Steps

1. **Avoid the Tug-of War:** Avoid giving reasons why to do ERP, or why it won't be so bad. OCD is like Honey Badger – it doesn't give a shit. If you catch yourself giving reasons, ZIP IT.
2. **Break it Down:** If your client is unwilling to do the ERP at all, don't just walk away! Suggest smaller steps, and make sure you reinforce those, gradually making them bigger and bigger.
3. **Watch for Avoidance:** Pay close attention to your client – are they fidgeting? That might be avoidance. Are they talking and talking and *not* doing the ERP? That's a ninja-level ERP avoidance trick. Block avoidance, and encourage your client to move forward with the ERP.
4. **Coach Curiosity:** OCD is a little @\$&ing dictator – it wants you to listen to it, and only it. You, my excellent ERP coach, want to encourage your client to be curious about what it might be like if they do their ERP. So say things like, "I wonder how close you can get that contaminated ball of poo to your face before you poop your pants!" Get them *wondering*, as that will undermine their OCD "have to" rules.
5. **Pay Attention on Purpose:** How do you know when someone is white-knuckling? YOU DON'T. UNLESS...unless of course you teach them the replacement behavior of *mindful awareness* of their physical sensations, their emotions, and their thoughts during the ERP. In order for ERP to work, they need to be *\*in\** their bodies, feeling everything, without defense – rather than just waiting until it's all over.
6. **Bring Their "Why" to Mind:** Why the heck would anyone do the horrible crap you are going to ask them to do during their ERP? Because *not* doing that crap, and building one's life around all the things one *will not* do, sucks. So before you embark on your ERP, have your client call to mind their *why*, whatever that thing is that is so important to them. So, for example, instead of saying, "Are you willing to do your ERP?" say "If doing this really crappy/disgusting/terrifying ERP is a huge step on the way to a life you could love, full of friends, and freedom, and being the kind of person you really want to be, are you willing to take that step?"
7. **Stay In It:** Don't just walk away if kids refuse to do ERP. Stay there, have them do a mindful, imaginal exposure around what it's like to be in this space that's so scary right now, where they could choose to do the hard thing, and they just might, but no pressure, totally up to them...you could have them imagine what it would be like to do the thing, what are all the things that might go wrong...make sure you have them practice mindful awareness while you do this. This, you sillies *is* ERP! You're just doing it imaginally! D'oh!
8. **Shape Willingness:** So willingness is not either/or or on/off! If your client says they are unwilling to feel whatever thoughts and feelings show up, *stay and coach*. Willingness occurs on a continuum. It's also a behavior that you can *shape*. Break it down into smaller steps, *model* doing the ERP yourself (yes, you *should* eat that cookie off the toilet. Why haven't you done that yet??),

ask them to do the smallest possible step they are willing to do. Reinforce the *process*, not the *outcome*.

9. **Amp It Up:** So when kids say “I’m at a 10!!” that doesn’t mean you should back down your ERP – unless of course you want to reinforce their idea that they \*can’t\* experience super high levels of anxiety because they will somehow break into a million pieces or melt into a puddle on the floor. If your client says they are a 10, you should say, “Awesome!! What an opportunity! You are kicking OCD’s ass! How can we amp it up even higher?” OF COURSE! Have you noticed that “I’m at a 10” is a *thought* just like any other – and we can either *obey* or revolt? I think a little bit of revolution is a healthy thing, don’t you? Especially when that little @%\$# dictator OCD is telling them what to do?
10. **Remember Your ABCs.** No, smarty pants, it doesn’t mean Antecedent, Behavior, Consequence. Nuuuurd. (Lisa will think you are cool tho, because she is also a nuuuurd). It means: **Always. Be. Coaching. ALWAYS BE COACHING.** In the dining room? ABC! In the classroom? ABC! Walking down the hallways? A! B! C! Aspire to be a WALKING TRIGGER.

**If you stick to these 10 steps, you will be a magnificent ERP coach. You will help your clients reclaim their power, and their freedom. REMEMBER: we are not here to make OCD go away – WE ARE HERE SO THAT WHEN IT SHOWS IT, IT HAS NO POWER OVER THESE BRAVE LITTLE SOULS IN OUR CARE.**

## How to be an Awesome ERP Coach, in 10 Steps

1. Avoid the Tug-of War
2. Break it Down
3. Watch for Avoidance
4. Coach Curiosity
5. Pay Attention on Purpose
6. Bring Their “Why” to Mind
7. Stay In It
8. Shape Willingness
9. Amp It Up
10. ALWAYS BE COACHING.

## EXERCISE: What Parts of Your Life Have Been Made Smaller Because of Anxiety?

In this exercise reflect on the areas of your life, and how they currently are due to the struggle. Reflect on each Life area in turn before then going on to describe how you would like it to be. When you describe how you would like it to be, write as though there are no barriers, as if you could effortlessly act like the person you really want to be.

<b>Life Domain</b>	<b>How it is, because of the struggle with anxiety</b>	<b>How I would like it to be, based on my valued directions</b>
<i>Intimate Relationship</i>		
<i>My Health</i>		
<i>Work</i>		
<i>Leisure time</i>		
<i>Family relationships</i>		
<i>Friendships</i>		

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# How to make the ACT of exposure work

- Prepare to feel uncomfortable.
- Connect with your valued direction
- Choose to be willing to the experiences you have: notice and be present
- Do not use safety behaviours before, during, or after exposure
- Be curious about the consequences of being in contact with discomfort
- Stay in the exposure situation for long enough to discover new things
- Repeat exposures
- Practice in different places, times and situations

*Adapted from Abramowitz, Deacon & Whiteside (2011). Exposure therapy for anxiety: Principles & practice. Guilford Press.*

# Exposure Practice Worksheet

(inhibitory learning)

## Preparation

What am I afraid of? (i.e. what do I need to expose myself to?)

What do I fear will happen? (what is the worst that could happen?)

How likely is it that the feared outcome will happen? (0 – 100%) \_\_\_\_\_

How severe would it be if this happened? (0 – 100%) \_\_\_\_\_

## Exposure

Exposure yourself to the feared situation

For as long as is practical

Being open to the experience, and

Not acting on any safety behaviours

Noticing and connecting with how you feel emotionally

## Outcome and Learning

What was the outcome of the exposure?

What did you learn?

*If you were to exposure yourself again now:*

How likely is it that the feared outcome would happen? (0 – 100%) \_\_\_\_\_

How severe would it be if this happened? (0 – 100%) \_\_\_\_\_

## Living Life Beyond the Comfort Zone (Exposure Log) Worksheet

<b>Step Outside of Comfort Zone</b> (activities, things, places, and people)	<b>Anxiety</b> (0 - 10)	<b>Valued Direction</b> (that this step is about)	<b>How do I want to act</b> with this step? (If I acted on my value)	<b>Experiences to struggle with</b> Feelings, thoughts, sensations, urges	<b>Mind tricks/ stories about these experiences</b>	<b>My Willingness</b> to have experiences AND take the step?	<b>What did you notice when you took the Step?</b>

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# Making a Commitment Worksheet

***“I am here now, Open to the way I feel, Aware of my thoughts, Actively doing what I care about”***

<b>I am</b>	Notice if you are getting caught up with any unhelpful stories about yourself. Let go of these stories if they seem to be in the way of acting on your value.	
<b>Here Now</b>	Get in contact being Here Now - noticing you are breathing, what you are feeling in your body, where you are. Let go of distracting thoughts about things that are not in your present control.	
<b>Open</b>	Allow yourself to feel what you are feeling, without trying to control your emotions. Open up and be willing to have these emotions while doing what you care about.	Describe these feelings
<b>Aware</b>	Notice the thoughts that show up while you are doing what you care about. Let them float by if they are not part of what you are doing; let them come along for the ride if they are. They are experiences rather than guides.	List these thoughts
<b>Actively Doing</b>	Move your body to do the thing you planned	Describe the things you were going to do:  What will others see you doing?
<b>What I care about</b>	What direction are you choosing to step toward?	Describe this chosen life direction  What are you wanting to stand for, in this moment?

Adapted from DJ Moran's "Safety at Work" © Joe Oliver, Jon Hill & Eric Morris 2015 – 'ACTivate Your Life'