

Choosing a Target Rescue

This week, you'll focus on building a support team to help you throughout the treatment process. The goal of this session is to identify and enlist supporters—people outside the immediate family who can help reinforce your messages, express care to the child, and mediate communication. Supporters are a powerful tool in promoting progress and overcoming obstacles.

Supporters can include relatives (e.g., aunts, uncles, grandparents), trusted friends of the family, individuals involved in the child's learning (e.g., teachers, tutors, guidance counselors, coaches), care providers, etc.

The role of supporters:

- Helping to reinforce parental messages
- Expressing care and concern for the child
- In some cases, helping children confront situations they fear
- Mediating communication between parent(s) and child
- Supporting parents/caregivers

We often hear concerns from parents/caregivers when we recommend involving supporters. Keep in mind:

- The role of supporters is not to shame or embarrass children, rather to rally around the child, giving them the message, “We all care about you and believe in you, and we are here to help you.”
- We often hear from families that supporters express admiration for the decision to actively address the challenge (instead of ignoring it), and not letting their own feelings (e.g., embarrassment) stand in the way of helping their child.
- It is a fallacy of modern parenting that challenges should be resolved within the immediate nuclear family. The belief that benefiting from help and support is equivalent to failure cuts families off from tremendously helpful support.
- While children may temporarily resist involving supporters in this process, doing so sends a few important messages:
 - Everyone feels worried/anxious/nervous/scared/fearful sometimes. This is a universal emotion that everyone can relate to.
 - This is nothing to be ashamed of or embarrassed about.
 - It's OK to ask for help.

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Choosing a Target Behavior

Next, you will learn how to choose the most appropriate target behavior to work on first. Here are some helpful criteria for determining whether a target behavior is appropriate:

- **Rescue-oriented:** The target behavior includes your behavior, not your child's. For example, some parents may indicate a child's refusal to speak in the classroom as a behavior they want to address. However, this is not an ideal target behavior to choose first (although perhaps it can be a target behavior at a later stage), because parents are not actively involved in that situation.
- **A "significant problem":** Choose a target behavior that impacts your child's ability to participate in day-to-day activities, or that impacts your ability to engage in your own routines and daily activities.
- **A recurrent problem:** The target behavior needs to happen at least 2-3 times per week so that you are able to practice repeatedly to promote learning.
- **Anxiety-related:** The target behavior must be a direct result of your child's anxiety. For example, a child who refuses to clean their room may do so for a variety of reasons that may or may not be related to anxiety.
- **Parent/caregiver is motivated:** Choose a target behavior you feel genuinely determined to address because as you begin taking active steps to create change, your motivation may be tested. (Change can be hard!)

Tips for success:

- Focus on one target behavior. For the time being, make a conscious choice to continue addressing other behaviors in the same ways you have been (even if you want to address these as target behaviors later on).
- Take logistical or practical factors into consideration. For example, you may decide to choose a target behavior that occurs in the afternoon instead of the morning, because it would be extremely disruptive to impact the morning routine at this time.

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Home Practice

- **Contact Supporters:** Reach out to your list of potential supporters and aim to identify at least 3 (three) people who agree to help and understand their role in the treatment process.
 - Consider how you want to contact each individual (e.g., email, phone call, text) and how you want to word your request
- **Choose a Target Rescue:** Use the provided criteria to identify which of your charted rescues are suitable targets for the program. Select 1 (one) specific parent behavior you want to work on. This can be the behavior you feel most limits your child's independence or most interferes with your own daily routine.
- Continue **charting rescues**.