



# GRADED EXPOSURE

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We have previously looked at how we can ‘test out’ our negative predictions and thoughts through behavioural experiments. But what happens when we have very specific fears or anxieties that feel way to overwhelming to test out this way right now.

Here we turn to an exercise called graded exposure. The concept of this is the same. We want to desensitise the brain to the stress experienced in these situations, and give our brain a chance to see that it actually can cope with these situations safely, and in the instance of graded exposure, we do this in a gradual way.

## HOW DOES IT WORK?

The first thing to do is to think about a situation that you fear and try to avoid. For example, some people might fear and avoid going to social places, or being assertive with others. Start by identifying the situation. From there you would break the situation down in to steps and list them.

Once you have made the list, you note down how much distress you feel around each step by giving them each a rating on a scale of 0 to 100. Finally, we would organise the list in order of distress experienced.

## FEAR HIERARCHY

Now that you have what we refer to as a fear hierarchy list with your steps ready you can start working step-by-step towards your major goal. Of course, goals with high distress (eg a rating of 80+) will need more steps than a medium distress goal (eg a rating of 40+).

You can break your goal into smaller steps by changing WHO is there, WHAT you do, WHEN you do it, WHERE you do it, and HOW long you do it for.

The goal is to get you to work on each item, starting from the bottom and moving up the steps as you start to feel more comfortable

