



Syracuse Integrative Psychiatry

Comprehensive care. Transformative outcomes.

Week 12: Behavioral Experiments II

Facing Avoidance

Avoidance feeds anxiety. When we avoid something scary, we feel better briefly (relief), but our brain learns "That was dangerous! Good thing I avoided it." This makes the anxiety stronger next time.

To break this, we use a **Fear Ladder** (Exposure Hierarchy). We face fears gradually, step by step.

Build Your Fear Ladder

Pick one fear (e.g., "Social Situations"). List steps from easiest to hardest. Rate the anxiety (0-100) for each.

10	Giving a toast at a wedding	Anxiety: 95
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9	Going to a party where I don't know anyone	Anxiety: 85
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8

(Write your step here...)

Anxiety: __

...

...

Anxiety: __

3

Asking a stranger for the time

Anxiety: 40

2

Making eye contact with a cashier

Anxiety: 30

1

Imagining saying "hello" to someone

Anxiety: 15

Homework

Start at Step 1 or 2. Do it repeatedly until your anxiety drops by half. Then move up to the next step.