Graded Exposure Worksheet

Graded Exposure is a CBT technique that is designed to help people confront and overcome their fears. When people are fearful of something, they tend to avoid it.

While this avoidance may help in reducing feelings of fear in the short term, over the long term it can make the fear even worse.

Graded exposure involves creating a safe environment in which clients can become "exposed" to the things they fear and avoid. The exposure to the feared objects, activities or situations in a safe environment helps reduce fear and decrease avoidance.

The Graded Exposure worksheet includes 4 steps:

1. **Make a list of feared situations that you tend to avoid.** For example, someone with social anxiety may typically avoid making a phone call or asking someone on a date.

2. **Rate each item** according to how distressed you would feel if you encountered that situation, on a scale from 0 to 100% (0 = not at all distressed and 100 = extremely distressed). For the person suffering with severe social anxiety, asking someone on a date may be rated a 10 on the scale, while making a phone call instead might be rated closer to a 3 or 4.

3. **Rank items from most-feared** (i.e., highest distress rating) at the top of the staircase to least-feared (i.e., lowest distress rating) at the bottom of the staircase.

4. **The staircase can now be used to guide a process of the graded exposure**. Clients can be guided to start exposing themselves to the least-feared items, building up as more confidence is gained. Key principles of exposure should be discussed (e.g. stay in situation without escaping, attempt multiple repeats of each exposure to encourage extinction).

Graded Exposure Worksheet

Worksheet

Construct a staircase with situations you tend to avoid because of fear or anxiety, with most-feared items at the top and least-feared items at the bottom. Rate each item according to how distressed you would feel if you encountered that situation, on a scale from 0 to 10 (0 = not at all distressed and 10 = extremely distressed).

Most Feared Situation

Anxiety Rating /100%

/100%

/100%

/100%

/100%

/100%

Least Feared Situation

Anxiety Rating /100%