

## EXERCISE: Broadening Your Life

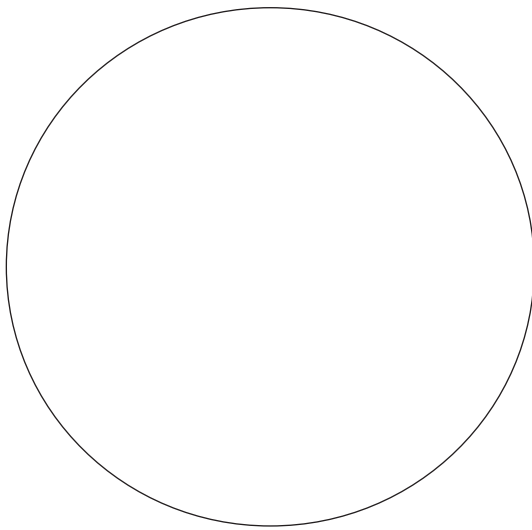
### *How Big Is Your Comfort Zone?*

We are going to invite you to reflect on what currently is *in your comfort zone*, and *what isn't*.

Your comfort zone is made up of the areas of your life and choices you make where you feel at ease (or at least less anxious). It could be that after living with anxiety for long time, and being guided by escaping and avoiding these feelings and sensations, your comfort zone is now quite small. It may also be that the comfort zone is not a rock-solid set of things that guarantee that you feel calm and relaxed. This is particularly the case if you have a tendency to experience panic attacks, worry excessively, or have anticipatory anxiety.

Through flexible contact, we are going to work on how to **broaden** your life, so that you can take steps outside of your comfort zone, and have more activities, people, places and things that you are engaged with.

Draw a circle on a piece of paper. Inside the circle, put the activities, things, places and people who would be in your comfort zone.



Now reflect on how things are currently: what is outside your comfort zone?

On the piece of paper, outside of the circle, list the activities, things, places and people who are outside your comfort zone. See if you can place them close up or further away, depending on how anxious you feel about them.

Now notice what is on the **edge** of your comfort zone – perhaps with just a push, or being you on a good day, you could stretch to be in contact with them. These things may be the focus of the first steps in doing exposure work.

You can think of the edge of your comfort zone as a little like an elastic band. When you stretch an elastic band beyond where it normally rests, it comes back to a size that is slightly larger than before. Your comfort zone works in the same way. When you stretch out beyond what feels comfortable you increase the size just a little. The more you practise this, the more room you will have in your comfort zone. What felt too frightening before, now sits within your comfort zone.