

Graded exposure

The way to confront situations that you usually try to avoid is to start with the ones that make you the least anxious and work up to the ones that make you the most anxious. This is known as graded exposure.

Stopping safety behaviours and facing up to situations that you fear will probably make you feel anxious. However, you do need to experience the anxiety without the help of your safety behaviours in order to get rid of any remaining belief that the scenario you fear may actually happen.

Also, the longer you're able to stay in the situation, the less anxious you'll eventually start to feel, because you are showing your brain that it needn't make you anxious. This is known as desensitisation.

You will need to rate the intensity of your feelings of anxiety using a scale of 0 to 100, where 100 means the worst anxiety that you have ever experienced, while 0 means a state where you are completely calm. Look at how Emily ranked the situations that she'd usually avoid:

Rank 0–100	Situation	Anxiety rating 0–100
1	Presenting a seminar to boss and clients	95
2	Taking a train to London	90
3	Attending weekly business meetings	85
4	Shopping at the supermarket	55
5	Going out for dinner	45

Using the table below, and with the help of your list of situations that you avoid or must endure only in very specific situations with safety behaviours

(see page 55), rate each one according to how anxious you think you would be if you were in that situation.

Rank 0–100	Situation	Anxiety rating 0–100
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		