

FOUR WAYS TO REDUCE FEAR

This exercise helps you develop four different ways to minimize your fear. After developing the four ways, you will then choose the one that you feel would be best for you and try it for the following week when encountering your fear.

1. Develop fully each of the following methods for resolving your fear.
 - A. **Exaggeration:** Start with identifying your fear; then imagine it as big, scary, ugly, and so on. Use as many negative descriptive words as possible in describing the fear in the worst possible way and with the most dire consequences.

Application: By imagining the worst that can happen in the worst possible way, the things I face don't seem so big or terrible.

- B. **Thought Restructuring:** Record the three most common thoughts you have that lead to increased feelings of fear (e.g., "I'm going to make a fool of myself," "Everyone is staring at me"). After completing that, ask your therapist to help you restructure your fear-producing thoughts into thoughts that are more realistic and positive (e.g., "I will do my best and people will respect me for that effort").

Thought 1: _____

Restructured: _____

Thought 2: _____

Restructured: _____

Thought 3: _____

Restructured: _____

Application: How we think about something affects our feelings. By changing our thoughts and perceptions, we change our feelings.

- C. **Therapist in Your Pocket:** Ask your therapist to provide you with three statements that will offer reassurance when you are encountering your phobia. Record them and then either commit them to memory or write them on a card to keep in your pocket at all times.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Application: Reassuring and encouraging statements from people we respect and trust can help us cope with difficult or scary situations.

- D. **Relaxing Distraction:** Create a favorite relaxing daydream to use to distract yourself when facing or thinking about the situation your fear. Then choose a relaxing activity to use as a distraction at other times (e.g., sunbathing on the beach).

Daydream: _____

Activity (e.g., quietly singing, relaxation breathing): _____

Application: When distracted, we forget our worries, fears, and troubles.

- 2. Choose an approach to your fear.

- A. Identify which of the four approaches (i.e., A, B, C, D) you feel would be most effective in helping you resolve your fear.

- B. Explain briefly the choice you made and why you feel it would be effective.

- C. Use an **X** to indicate how sure you feel about the approach working for you.

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Very Sure

Sure

Somewhat

A Little

Not at All

3. Make a commitment to use the approach you chose whenever you encounter the fear over the next week and then evaluate how effective it was in dealing with the fear after each time you used it.

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____