

# PANIC & ANXIETY

## SESSION 4 COURSE WORKBOOK

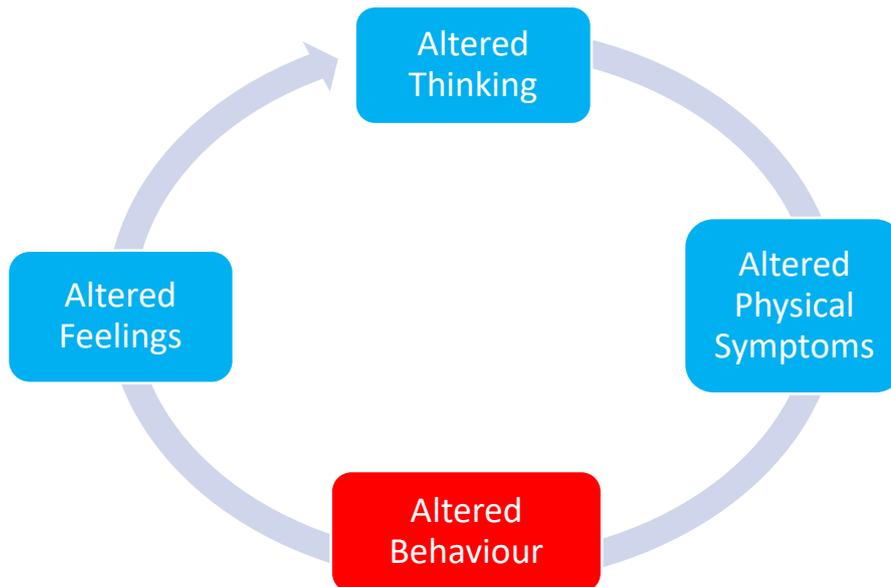




## PANIC AND ANXIETY COURSE

### PANIC AND BEHAVIOUR

In today's session we discussed the role of our behaviours in feeding panic & anxiety, and keeping the 'vicious circle' going. We also learned how we can overcome our avoidance and safety behaviours using graded exposure.



Our behaviour, what we do and how we respond to situations can play a big role in maintaining our panic & anxiety levels. Our unhelpful behaviours can be automatic and occur outside of our control.

#### **AVOIDANCE**

People who suffer from anxiety tend to avoid situations that might be anxiety-provoking or they simply escape the situations that might be uncomfortable or scary. Do you avoid:

- Talking to people?
- Going to busy places?
- Shopping? Picking up the phone?
- Opening letters and bills?
- Getting up?

Avoidance is very common and while it seems like a good solution to help us deal with our anxiety at the time, it can be very unhelpful and in fact it can make the anxiety worse. When you avoid anxiety-provoking situations you are not giving yourself a chance to check how well you could manage the situation. By avoiding certain situations you are sending yourself the message “I can't do it.”

Sometimes it takes time to get better at managing difficult situations (such as public speaking or going for an interview) and if you don't practise your skills by putting yourself in the situation, you will never improve. Avoidance can become a habit and an unhelpful way of coping. Unfortunately, it prevents you from learning and decreases the chance of overcoming anxiety. Avoidance can affect many areas of your life and can become very frustrating.

**Exercise 4.1**

What are the situations you avoid when you are stressed and anxious? Make a list...

Situations I avoid...
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**HOW CAN YOU OVERCOME AVOIDANCE?**

Try the step-by-step approach. Start by making a list of situations you avoid. Choose the easiest thing to tackle first and think about the steps you could take to tackle it. Look at Sally's example below and think about your own problem using a similar approach.

Standing outside house when it is quiet	1 (the easiest step)
Walking to post box near house	
Going to local shop with someone	
Going to local shop alone	
Going to a shopping centre for 30mins	
Going to a shopping centre for an hour	
Going to the city centre on Tuesday morning	
Going to the city centre on Saturday afternoon	10 (the most difficult step)

**Exercise 4.2.**

Choose one of the situations you avoid and make a plan how to tackle it. Start from the easiest step.

	(the easiest step)
	(most difficult step)

Once you are in the situation practise spending some time there. Try to stay long enough for your anxiety to decrease. Practise the easier steps again and again until you feel you can cope with them. Relaxation exercise and controlled breathing will help you manage the anxiety you might experience. Gradually move onto the more difficult items from your list of the situations using the same techniques

**SAFETY BEHAVIOURS**

Be aware of your safety behaviours. Safety behaviours are things we do which make facing anxiety-provoking situations a bit easier.

- Do you tend to have a drink before going out with friends so you are more fun and relaxed?
- Do you wear dark clothes to blend in with the crowd?
- Do you take drugs to make life easier?
- Do you go shopping only with the company of your friend or a family member?
- Do you speak quietly or maybe very quickly?

Safety behaviours can be helpful in the short-term, but you may become dependent on them and start believing that you can't do things on your own. If you want to learn how to manage your anxiety your first step could be dropping your safety behaviours (start from the behaviour that is easiest to drop). Remember about relaxation techniques and thought challenging to help you deal with your anxiety.

**Exercise 4.3**

Can you think of any safety behaviours you do? Are you ready to reduce or drop your safety behaviours?

<b>Safety behaviours I do...</b>	<b>Do I want to drop/reduce my safety behaviour? How can I do it?</b>

## TIPS FOR PRACTICE

In order not to set yourself up for a failure you need to plan ahead.

- ✓ Set daily goals and targets. Make your goals as specific as you can.
- ✓ Be realistic.
- ✓ Start from the easiest step.
- ✓ Practise controlled breathing and relaxation before leaving the house.
- ✓ Don't get discouraged if things aren't working out. Taking the first step is always difficult but once you do it, you will know you are on the right path.
- ✓ Be reflective. Think about any obstacles that might prevent you from reaching your goal, how can you overcome them? After taking the first step, review how it went. Ask yourself "What went well? What could have gone better? What changes can I introduce to make my plan more manageable?"
- ✓ Share your plan with your friends. Perhaps they have some good ideas.
- ✓ Be proud of yourself for trying and persevering.
- ✓ Practise, practise, practise! You might need to do the same step lots of times before you get better.

## HOMEWORK

Review the stepped plan you made in the exercise 4.2., can you think of any obstacles that might make your plan difficult to carry out? If yes, think how can you tackle them?

Between this and next week try to carry out step 1 from your list as many times as possible. Use the monitoring diary to monitor your anxiety levels whilst doing this.

Once it becomes easier try step 2...

Be reflective when you are doing it and after you have done it. Have a go at answering the questions below.

What went well?
What didn't go so well?
What have you learned?
What's the next step?

**SETTING S.M.A.R.T. GOALS**

Write your goal...

Write and refine your goals according to S.M.A.R.T

**Specific**  
Now ensure your goal is as specific as possible. Ensure it includes dates, times, resources, etc. that you will need to achieve it.

**Measurable**  
Now you need to ensure the goal is capable of being measured. If not, think about rephrasing so you can measure it.

**Achievable**  
Is your goal achievable, and if short term, is it possible to be achieved in the next couple of weeks? If not, think about breaking it down.

**Relevant**  
It is best to ensure that your goal is relevant to your life now. Will achieving the goal make a difference to you now? If not, try to adapt it so it is.

**Time specific**  
Try to set a time by which you want to achieve your goal. If short term this may be within the next week or two. If not, then go back to 'achievable' again and think about how to adapt it to make it so.

DATE / TIME	EXPOSURE EXERCISE	ANXIETY LEVEL BEFORE (0 = not anxious, 10= the most anxious)	ANXIETY LEVEL DURING (0 = not anxious, 10= the most anxious)	ANXIETY LEVEL AFTER (0 = not anxious, 10= the most anxious)	ANY THOUGHTS?	REFLECTIONS (What went well? What didn't go well? What did I learn?)