

# Exercise

Professional Version | US English

# Facing Your Fears



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## Description

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Graded or graduated exposure is a traditional way of overcoming fears and phobias. The therapist helps the client to draw up a list of feared situations which are then faced in order of increasing difficulty. The traditional 'rule' for exposure was that the client was to be encouraged to remain in the feared situation until fear had habituated to some degree (often by about 50%). Graded exposure is helpful because its simple rationale tends to make it acceptable to clients leading to greater adherence. Graded exposure builds upon success: therapists can build upon positive feelings associated with successfully overcoming fears lower down the hierarchy.


Clinicians should note that modern approaches to exposure have de-emphasized the importance of hierarchies in favour of exposure schedules, including tasks which violate the client's expectancies or which increase the variability of the exposure (Craske et al, 2014). For example, as an alternative to a traditional exposure setup a behavioral experiment may be conducted where the client expresses the belief "If I go near the spider it will jump on my face" and then tests that prediction. Varying the stimuli, durations, intensity, times, and contexts of exposure has also been demonstrated to increase the effectiveness of exposure and should be considered if clients are willing.

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## Instructions

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### Suggested Question



*One way of overcoming our anxieties is to confront whatever it is that we are afraid of. Have you ever heard of the phrase 'facing your fears'? A really good way to do this is to draw up a list of the situations that make us feel frightened so that we know what we need to confront.*

Tips for therapists:

- Hierarchies do not always have to be started at the bottom – the items here are often too simple and can be a less productive use of therapy time. Consider asking "Where should we start?"
- Make sure to positively reinforce exposure attempts. This worksheet includes space to color-in items as they are attempted.
- Consider asking clients to rate how much each item frightens them, or to rate how much they expect a specific catastrophe to occur should they attempt that item.

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## References

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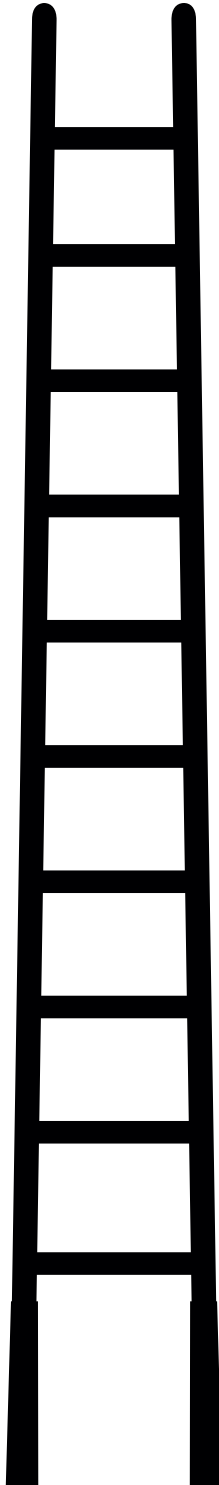
Craske, M. G., Treanor, M., Conway, C. C., Zbozinek, T., & Vervliet, B. (2014). Maximizing exposure therapy: an inhibitory learning approach. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 58, 10-23.

# Facing Your Fears

To overcome our fears it can help to build our confidence gradually. You can think of it as being like climbing the steps of a ladder.

Start by writing down the fear that you are facing. Then for each step of the ladder write down one thing you can do to face that fear head-on. Make sure to reward yourself for each step you take.

The fear I am facing is: \_\_\_\_\_



Most difficult

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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Least difficult

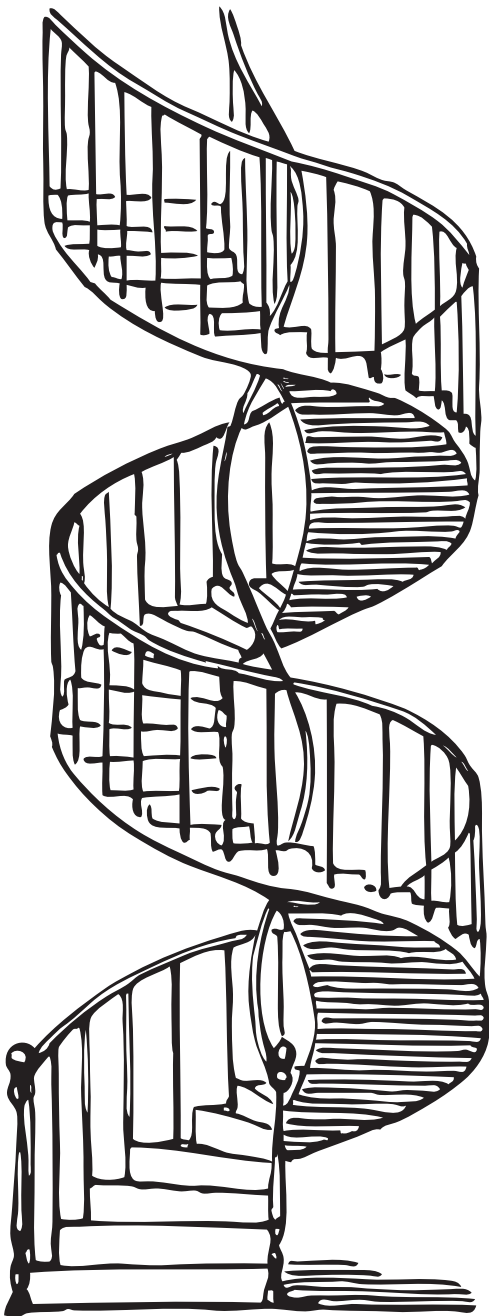


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Most difficult \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Least difficult \_\_\_\_\_



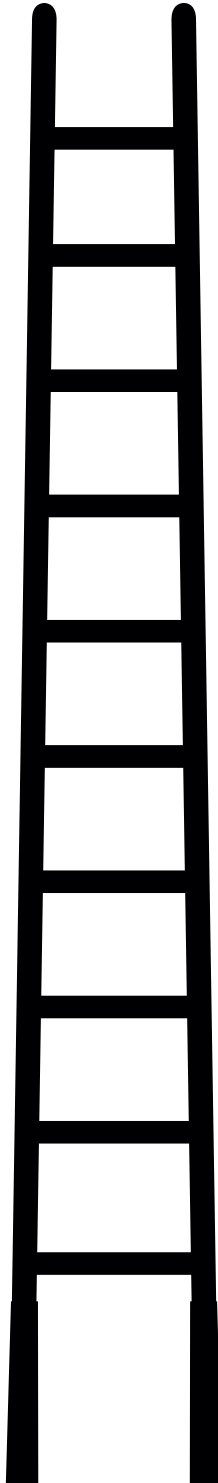
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The fear I am facing is: I am scared of spiders.



Letting a spider crawl on my hand.

Most difficult



Touching a spider's web.



Being up close to a 'free' spider.



Being up close to a spider in a jar.



A spider in a jar far away from me.



Watching a video of spiders.



Looking at pictures of spiders.



Doing a drawing of spiders.



Talking about spiders.



Thinking about spiders.



Least difficult

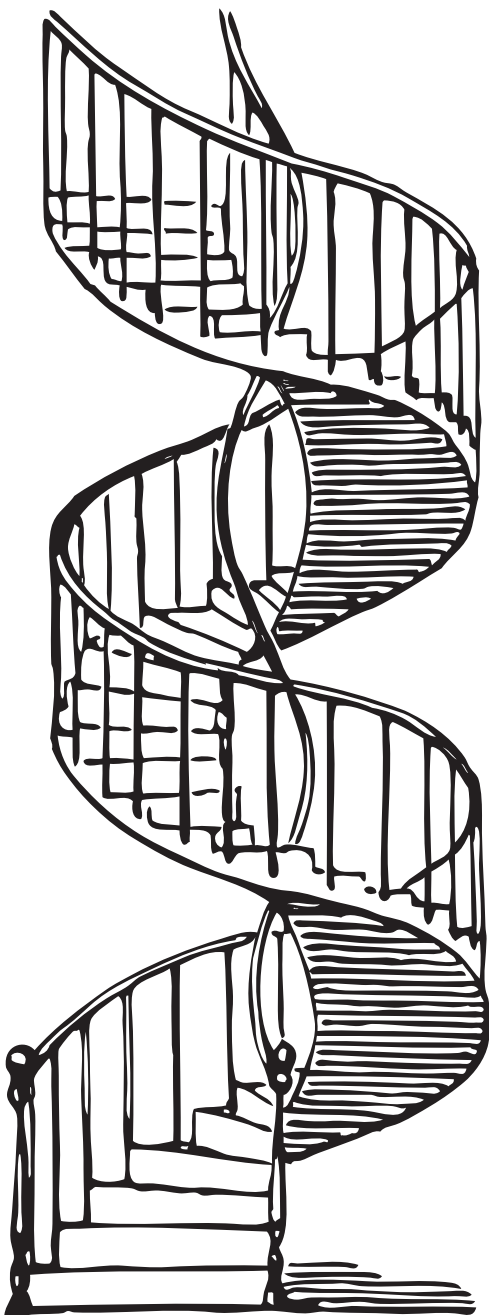
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Least difficult

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