

Section IID

ADULT HOMEWORK

ANALYZE THE PROBABILITY OF A FEARED EVENT*

GOALS OF THE EXERCISE

1. Develop an awareness of the irrational nature of the fear and anxiety.
2. Examine the probability of the negative expectation occurring and its consequences.
3. Identify distorted self-talk that mediates the anxiety response.
4. Recognize that the feared outcome will not terminate the ability to function.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PROCESSING THIS EXERCISE WITH THE CLIENT

Support the client as he/she takes the risk of looking boldly and fairly at the basis for his/her anxiety. Help the client to acknowledge the irrational basis for his/her anxiety and reinforce rational outcomes of feared situations that will not devastate his/her life. Pay special attention to the distorted cognitions that feed the fear and suggest realistic positive self-talk to counteract this strong mediation effect.

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ANALYZE THE PROBABILITY OF A FEARED EVENT

Many of our fears grow in their intensity without us ever stopping to analyze their exact nature, their causes, their probabilities of occurrence, the amount of control we might have over the situation, and the very real outcomes that are possible if our fears were realized. This exercise will help you thoroughly review your fears. As you rationally analyze the nature and cause of your fear and its real outcome, the fear will dissipate and your ability to cope will increase. Take this step-by-step approach in looking at three of your greatest fears and then bring this analysis to your counselor for a thorough processing and reinforcement of coping skills.

1. My First Fear

A. What is the fear or anxiety about?

B. What is the possibility on a scale of 1 (very unlikely) to 10 (inevitable) that the feared outcome will actually come to pass?

C. What self-talk messages do you give yourself that make the fear grow?

D. What are the very real consequences if the feared outcome did occur?

E. What can you do to control the outcome of the situation that you fear?

F. What is the worst possible real outcome if your fear was realized?

G. How would your life be affected if your feared outcome actually happened? How would you cope or continue to function?

2. My Second Fear

A. What is the fear or anxiety all about?

B. What is the possibility on a scale of 1 (very unlikely) to 10 (inevitable) that the feared outcome will actually come to pass?

C. What self-talk messages do you give yourself that make the fear grow?

D. What are the very real consequences if the feared outcome did occur?

E. What can you do to control the outcome of the situation that you fear?

F. What is the worst possible real outcome if your fear was realized?

G. How would your life be affected if your feared outcome actually happened? How would you cope or continue to function?

3. My Third Fear

A. What is the fear or anxiety about?

B. What is the possibility on a scale of 1 (very unlikely) to 10 (inevitable) that the feared outcome will actually come to pass?

C. What self-talk messages do you give yourself that make the fear grow?

D. What are the very real consequences if the feared outcome did occur?

E. What can you do to control the outcome of the situation that you fear?

F. What is the worst possible real outcome if your fear was realized?

G. How would your life be affected if your feared outcome actually happened? How would you cope or continue to function?

FOUR WAYS TO REDUCE FEAR*

GOALS OF THE EXERCISE

1. Identify and develop specific strategies to resolve the fear.
2. Implement a specific strategy on a consistent basis to minimize the impact of the fear.
3. Increase confidence and effectiveness in coping with the fear.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PROCESSING THIS EXERCISE WITH THE CLIENT

The focus in processing this exercise should be placed on assisting the client in completely developing each of the resolution strategies and in helping him/her to fully implement that strategy. Offer encouragement, feedback, and direction as needed as you follow up on the strategy. If the first strategy chosen does not seem to be effective despite the client's best efforts, another option should be chosen and implemented.

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FOUR WAYS TO REDUCE FEAR

This exercise will help you develop four different ways to minimize your fear. After developing the four ways, you 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 or four most common thoughts you have that lead to increased feelings of fear. After completing that, ask your therapist to help you restructure your fear-producing thoughts into thoughts that are more realistic and positive.

Thought 1 _____

Restructured _____

Thought 2 _____

Restructured _____

Thought 3 _____

Restructured _____

Thought 4 _____

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 four or five statements that will offer reassurance when you are encountering your phobia. Record them below and then either commit them to memory or write them on a card to keep in your pocket at all times.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

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 you fear. Then choose a relaxing activity to use as a distraction at other times (Example: Sunbathing on the beach).

Daydream: _____

Activity: (Example: Quietly singing, relaxation breathing)

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

2. Choosing an approach to my fear:

A. Identify which of the four approaches (i.e., A, B, C, or D) that 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 below how sure you feel about the approach working for you.

Very	Sure	Somewhat	A Little	Not at
Sure				All

On a scale of 1 to 10 rate your determination to overcome your fear.

1	5	10
I'll live with it.		I <i>must</i> conquer it.

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.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

PAST SUCCESSFUL ANXIETY COPING*

GOALS OF THE EXERCISE

1. Identify successful coping strategies used in the past.
2. View yourself as a capable, resourceful person who has been successful at overcoming fear.
3. Apply successful coping strategies from the past to current anxieties.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PROCESSING THIS EXERCISE WITH THE CLIENT

This solution-focused assignment attempts to get the client to recognize his/her resourcefulness in the past in dealing with anxiety. Help the client clarify and refine the coping skill that he/she used as this will be the most difficult part of the assignment. Clients are often not aware of what coping mechanism they relied on to deal with their fear. After the successful coping skills have been identified and refined, help the client to apply these successful skills from the past to his/her current anxieties. Monitor and modify the solution as required.

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PAST SUCCESSFUL ANXIETY COPING

This assignment leads you to focus on resources and successes that you have demonstrated throughout your past. We tend to forget about our ability to cope when our anxieties and fears seem so real and debilitating. However, all of us have had fears that we have overcome or that we have functioned with in spite of their presence from childhood right into adulthood. We may have feared attending kindergarten, but we learned ways to cope with that fear and eventually the fear was eradicated. We may have feared talking to a friend of the opposite sex, but eventually learned to speak to them in spite of our anxiety. We may have feared going on a job interview, but pressed forward and presented ourselves in the best manner possible. In other words, we do learn to cope and to function and to overcome anxiety. We cannot allow our anxieties to cripple us or cause us to avoid circumstances but we must face them head-on. We may have coped by just taking a deep breath or by getting encouragement from our friends or by rehearsing what we were going to do or say so often that it became almost automatic. Whatever coping skill we used, we have been successful in the past and now we must rediscover those coping skills and apply them to the current anxieties.

A. Identify three fears or anxieties that you experienced in the past.

Fear #1:

Fear #2:

Fear #3:

B. Identify what you did to cope with, or continue to function in spite of, the anxiety.

Fear #1:

Fear #2:

Fear #3:

C. How do you know your coping mechanism identified above was successful?

Fear #1:

Fear #2:

Fear #3:

D. What other coping skills have you relied on in the past to help you overcome fears?

E. How can you use each of the coping skills identified in B to help you with your current fears?
