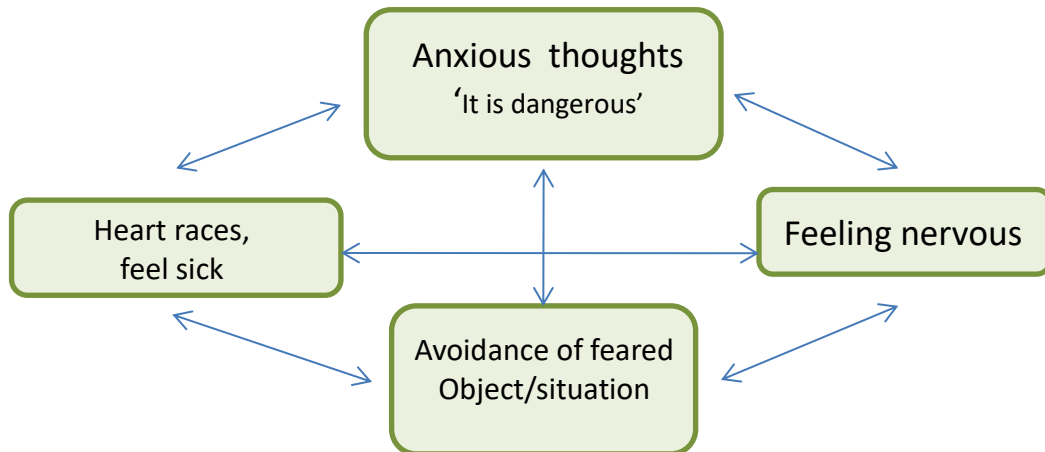


## Exposure

### What is Exposure?

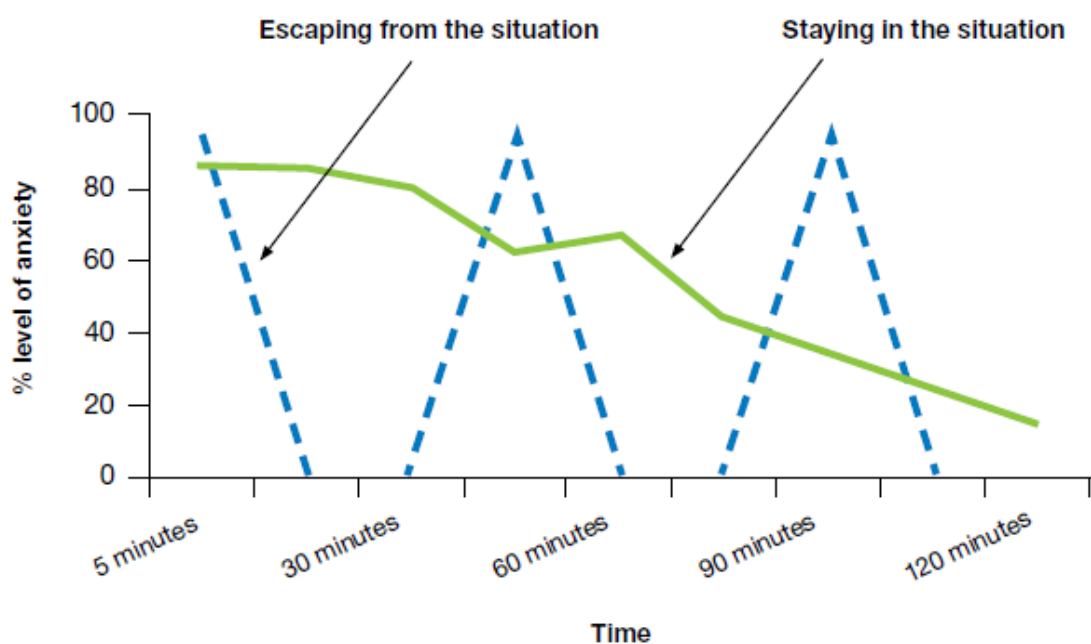
Exposure is a very effective therapeutic intervention based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). CBT is based on the idea that people's thoughts, behaviours and emotions affect each other and that changing one area can affect all the others.



Exposure involves facing your feared situation, object or memory gradually.

### Avoidance

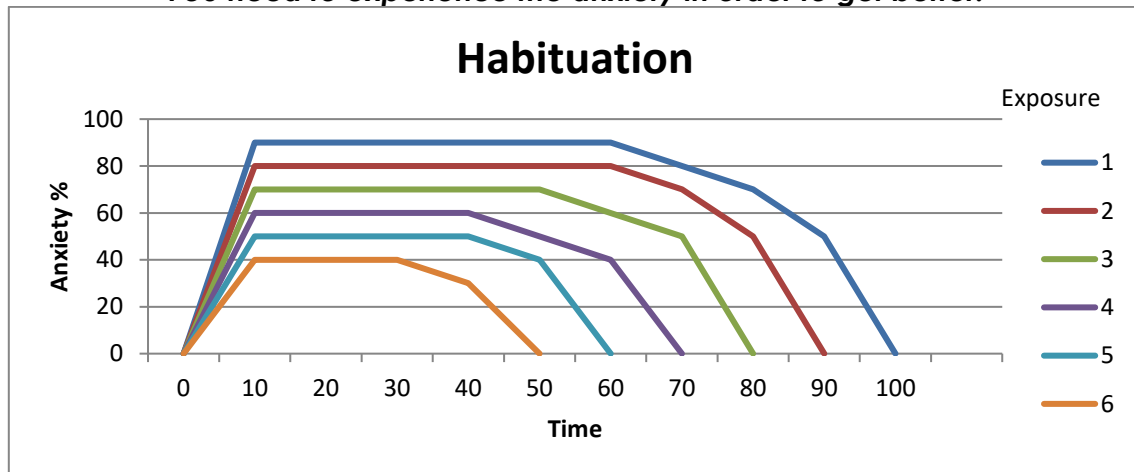
By avoiding a feared object/situation, people experience relief, which leads to more avoiding of the object/situation. However avoidance prevents people learning that the object/ situation feared is not dangerous.



### How does Exposure Work?

Exposure therapy works through a process known as habituation. Habituation is the natural lowering of anxiety which happens when people stay with their feared object/situation for a period of time. The more times you face the situation/object the quicker the anxiety will go down.

**You will discover that your fear is not as frightening as you think it is. –  
You need to experience the anxiety in order to get better.**



### Example:

**You see a spider and feel very anxious so you run away, which makes you feel instantly relieved. However you don't learn the spider is not dangerous**

### What makes sure exposure works?

- Prolonged** – ensure you are exposed for enough time for arousal levels to reduce.
- Repeated** – keep repeating the exposure until there is a minimal reaction.
- Without distraction** – don't allow avoidance or safety behaviours (i.e. distractions, reassurances from loved ones) to prevent experiencing anxious feelings.

### The Stages of Exposure Therapy

**Step 1:** Understand How Exposure works.

**Step 2:** List some fearful situations/objects

**Step 3:** Order situations/objects from least feared to most feared.

**Step 4:** Plan repeated exposures to feared stimulus (starting with least feared)

**Step 5:** Complete exposures as planned and record levels of anxiety.

**Remember to remain in the presence of the feared situation or object until you experience a reduction in arousal (habituation).**

**Step 6:** Review progress with Practitioner/ Repeat process.



## Hierarchy of Feared Situations

Most Feared



Least Feared



## Planned Exposures

Fill in the detail of the exercises you take part in, so you can monitor you progress over time and discuss how they went with your Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner.

Date/ Time	Duration	Exercise What did you do?	Rating Before/During/After 0-100% Anxiety	Comments How did it go?

(Charlotte Winfield & Rochelle Barden 2010)