

## 1. EXPOSURE THERAPY

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### ***Wahey!***

You made it to the sixth and final Worksheet!

Bloody well done!

Omg you're such a star <3

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The 6<sup>th</sup> and last Worksheet is all about Exposure Therapy.

So what is exposure Therapy?

***"It does exactly what it says on the tin!"***

Exposure Therapy is about confronting the problem areas head-on!

### **So what are the problem areas?**

They can be anything, to be fair. You could have Anxiety, Depression, PTSD, CPTSD, Fears and Phobias, or even OCD.

Many roundabout issues can be addressed with Exposure Therapy. Even people who suffer from globophobia, which is the fear of balloons!

Exposure doesn't have to happen every day. You take it step by step. Rushing will only bring you back to the start. Remember **'Consistency, not Intensity'**.

So, for a little more in-depth look at a situation, let's revisit my Canal Walk.

A day in the life of an Agoraphobic. Yes, I have significant issues with the outside, believe it or not.

Agoraphobia is not just the fear of being outside; it's avoiding places, people and things that may cause triggers, making you feel helpless, trapped, or even embarrassed.

For whatever reason, this person does not want to leave or go places. It is different for every person who suffers from this kind of fear or phobia. I myself have had weird experiences of Agoraphobia over the years, and I go through days where I don't want to leave the house at all, and other days I can feel caged and need to leave. But then, when I'm out, sometimes all I can do is sit in my car! And there are days when I can't go anywhere without someone. I have to analyse every trip I take. I have to weigh up the pros and cons, the possible outcomes, possible issues, and possible feats. It can be draining before I have even gone anywhere. It can take days to psyche myself up for a planned trip.

Then don't even get me started on what it is like being there. I know what I must look like to people when they have to deal with me in a waiting room, a shop, or even just in general. I am a tapper, a fidgetor;

whether it's my heel bouncing up and down, causing me to shake my leg nervously, or my fingers tapping against the seat of a chair, I have even scratched myself enough to bleed, and I claw my palms often when I unknowingly squeeze my fists too tightly. I can't help it. I'm too fixated on keeping my mind focused and not letting it go crazy with the what-ifs.

If I have to go places like the doctor's office and wait in the waiting room, I have to sit away from others. I hide in a corner or at the back, where I can concentrate on posters and floor tiles, and I even hum. I sometimes distract myself with maladaptive daydreaming, anything to get me out of my current state of anxiety.

I have even cried at one point because I convinced myself that the people in the waiting area were watching me, judging me, and even laughing. A receptionist allowed me to go sit in the confines of their private room, where I waited for the doctor to call me. I had got myself into such a state that I was drawing so much attention to myself, and the people in the waiting room were now looking at me.

How weird it must have been to see a grown ass woman sitting there crying and not just tears, but sobbing. It was a hard day, and an awful experience. These kinds of experiences are what I try to avoid. Unless someone has gone through this before, no one genuinely knows what it feels like.

With Exposure Therapy, the idea is to keep putting yourself in these situations to help you eventually overcome your problem. But as I said, '**consistency, not intensity.**' Take your time, and do as little or as much as you can muster. But make no mistake, progress is progress, no matter how little or much you do. Your determination is the progress.

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## REVISITING 'The Canal Walk'.

I'm walking alone down by the canal. No one else is around; it is just me. At the moment, I am calm yet a little apprehensive. The sense of peace comes when I begin to focus on the natural sounds around me. I concentrate on the birds, the rustling of trees in the wind, and the steady stream of water beside me. But then all is lost the moment I hear a stick break behind me.

### A Breakdown Using Exposure Therapy:

As I confessed in our last Worksheet **CFT**, this is actually a real-life scenario. As brief and straightforward as this story was, there is more to it than that. But for the example section, I shortened and made it resonate with the current topic.

In this topic (ET), I will tell the story with a little more detail than before, and we will use Exposure Therapy to help with my agoraphobia.

Let me turn this into a step-by-step guide to handling this process, utilising the Exposure Therapy technique, and hopefully, you will see a better result.

#### 1. This walk was a spontaneous decision.

Part of my previous coping tactics is that I plan my journeys well ahead of time.

**Reasoning for spontaneity:** My idea is that if I didn't 'wing it', I would have time to talk myself out of it. My usual 'weighing up' how it could fail, succeed, and the benefits of said journey would eventually decide my course of action.

## 2. The journey.

I live about a 2-minute walk from the canal that runs along the main road of my area. Walking to this location, as much as it was a short distance, the idea of walking to this location was a massive ask.

**Reasoning for the issue of walking to the location:** Too much to cope with. Traffic, noise & random people.

**Solution:** My friend kept me focused and kept me grounded.

## 3. The Canal.

As secluded and quiet as the canal is, it still poses a great threat and fear for me.

**Possible threats and fears:** Where do I begin?!

- a) **People:** Part of my issue is the fear of running into people I don't particularly want to see, whether that be a specific person or the family of said person. Even people I know pose a problem; the idea of being outside and having to deal with them would almost certainly overwhelm and agitate me.

**Conclusion:** So those encounters would be a significant source of anxiety for me.

- b) **Exposure:** I don't like the idea of being exposed, in the sense that I am vulnerable to people and the outside. This is the unsafe feeling I had in the original telling of the story when we broke down the ABC method of this situation. My **beliefs** and **thoughts** cloud my judgment and ultimately bring me to a complete shutdown. "Someone is behind me!" "I am not safe!" are some of the things I tell myself.

Yes, I initially stated in those beliefs that I was also 'alone.' It didn't matter that my friend was there; this is the kind of panic I resort to. Previously, in these kinds of states, I was alone. With my trauma and the abuse I sustained through my marriage, I was alone because I told no one, and no one was coming to save me. I constantly reinforce that state of mind when I am in panic mode, AKA: Freeze, Fight or Flight mode, those words are my first thoughts.

**Solution:** My friend reinforced her set of positive reinforcements. She reminded me that I was not alone, she told me to make eye contact with her, and she grounded me. She reminded me that I was okay, that we were okay. And that she was here with me and we'd get through this together.

- c) **The Walk.**

The walk itself is a 2.99km/1.86mi circuit; it probably would have taken about 30-40 minutes. But on this particular day, I only managed the first half, which was 358m, and would have taken approximately 14 minutes to complete. But for us, it took even longer because I stopped at almost every sound, every passerby and cyclist on the way there and back.

**Conclusion:** On this day, I did not complete the circuit, but I made a great effort. I pushed myself further than most days, and my accomplishment was not only walking from my house to the canal path, but also walking to the first circuit and back. No matter how long it took me.

**Final thought on this exercise:** I have done many spontaneous walks since then. Not just at the canal; my friend accompanied me on other walks through country parks, to waterfalls in Brecon, and to the beach! And I have continued my progress towards my goal of breaking free of my agoraphobia.

***“Consistency, not intensity.”***

Keep exposing yourself to your fears as much as you can, and take those steps towards conquering them for good!

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Well, we have come to the end of my Worksheets.

I wanna thank you so much for downloading and taking the time to read and hopefully learn from them. I know they are not very long, but I carefully scripted them for easier reading, comprehension and authenticity. With the information you have in these sheets, you should be able to incorporate many of these tips into your own healing journey.

I'm not saying I will not do more. The more I learn, the more I will share with you, and I will continue to expand my healing compass to showcase my knowledge and help.

I will be uploading Journal samples to the files section as well, so you'll have a quick example of how I journal, and maybe you can incorporate it into your journey if you don't already.

I appreciate your continued support, and I hope that these Worksheets help you as much as the knowledge I have gathered in my own journey has helped me.

If you are looking for something else, please explore the other categories on [My Healing Compass](#), as I continually expand my reach within each category.

I have:

- Physical Exercise & Movements.
- Videos
- Podcasts/ Music.
- Journaling
- Spirituality
- And My Book Nook

All coming soon!

Please keep checking back, and if you have any feedback, please don't hesitate to [contact](#) me.

Please look after yourself, you are amazing!

This world needs light like yours <3

*Ellie x*

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