

106 L. Becoming who you are

Persons suffering from anxiety & panic disorders carry a lot of self-doubt, believing they are helpless, but actually no one is helpless, we all have abilities, skills, knowledge, strengths to face life, though some, may just need help finding & seeing their specific strengths & skills, as they have become buried behind something that is stuck in the forefront of their mind.

Internal resources include – Intellect, street smarts, aptitude, Spirituality, coping skills, abilities, talents, knowledge, personality, humor, strength, resiliency & self-confidence, etal.

Developing confidence can help bolster an ability to view oneself as capable & desired, instead of questioning competency, or desirability, as people need to see that they don't have to be perfect, they can face fear & can make mistakes & can ask for help & are just as "normal" as all others, as we all have hidden thoughts & feelings.

Those who become confident, with social desirability, don't fear rejection & learn that facing fears is a key to life & recovery, by changing to new, more accurate conclusions about feared predictions, often through something as powerful as exposure therapy, to help with brain change.

In vivo exposure: Directly facing the feared object, situation, or activity in real life, can be done for up to 20 minutes, then think about & discuss the results & thoughts.

Remember that success is in the doing, not in any of the feelings & doing it while afraid, is a win.

Exposures need to be repeated, proving to the brain, that one can confront fears & can tolerate uncomfortable feelings of anxiety, without any real harm.

Some may need a fear hierarchy, where they rank fears from least distressing, to most & work their way through them systematically.

We then repeat exposures daily, or more, until learning is accomplished. We will also need to learn to eliminate safety behaviors, to fully learn to eliminate the fears permanently.

In exposure we identify what is avoided & feared & discuss rationale of exposure & how avoidance prevents recovery, remembering that success is in facing the fear, regardless of feelings.

Decide which exposures to use, make clear predictions, start exposures, with hierarchy, if need be, discuss the outcomes of each exposure, so clear conclusions & learning can be seen, then practice, practice, practice.

Goals involve learning how to realistically appraise risk & resources. Cognitive restructuring can help in evaluating automatic thoughts, for a more appropriate course of action, while realizing the world is not judging us, as harshly as we judge ourselves.

Cognitive restructuring can help to objectively evaluate perceptions & reframe faulty conclusions. This can be accomplished through reliving the experience via imagery.

Written coping cards (index cards or?) can help to get past fears. These cards should encourage & remind one, of one's personal issues, e.g. Others negative opinion of me doesn't define me, others negative opinion of me doesn't need to impact me, the world is too pre occupied to be paying attention to me, I can

embrace my shortcomings, as being perfect is not a requirement of success, or being loved, I can put myself out there as I am not going to let fear & social judgement stop me, from doing what I enjoy, I can get out of my head & be part of the world around me, which is not as bad as I think.

Be sure to read these cards often.

Many may need to seek assertiveness skills training, to learn to state the facts & let others know how they feel, to acknowledge others points of view, to express desires & possibly to role play.

Social anxiety sufferers should review coping cards, to see that anxiety is caused by overestimations of threats & underestimation of resources, as they also face fears of rejection & need to see that they can survive, without others opinions & also focus on strengths & record them, for building up a positive self image.

We all need to face once avoided situations & put oneself in situations, that exceed fears, to prove to your brain, that inner fears are just thoughts & not reliable truths, don't be afraid to show the world the real you, as it's the best & only you there is.

Again, therapy is very helpful & highly recommended for a more advanced recovery, in all situations, yet if not an option yet, then people may need help to realize what resources are available, as well as how to develop & build up other internal & external resources on their own, with resources that are available.