

How to Create a Fear Ladder

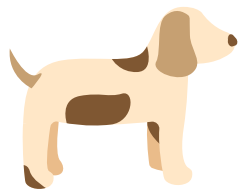
Step-by-Step Guide

<p>1. Think of something that you avoid that makes you nervous</p>	<p>This should be something that you want to do or need to do but that you avoid a lot because it makes you nervous. For example, maybe you are VERY afraid of Kangaroos and make sure to avoid them, but if you live in the U.S., this probably doesn't cause a huge problem in your life, so you don't really need to learn to overcome this fear. On the other hand, if you're very afraid of driving in the car, avoiding cars might make things a lot more difficult.</p> <p>To sum up: think of something you avoid because it makes you nervous or afraid, but something that would be helpful for you to do more often and/or easily.</p>
<p>2. Set a goal</p>	<p>Start with something you want to be able to do (example: talk to people more easily) and make a specific goal. Be sure to list:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What you want to do – be clear! (example: talk to one person I don't know very well) • When or where you want to do it (example: during school lunch, next Wednesday) • How long you will do it for, if relevant (example: talk for at least 5 minutes)
<p>3. Think of at least five activities related to your goal</p>	<p>Build a list of steps to related to your goal, that will help you reach your goal. These may be slightly easier versions of your goal, or related tasks that are difficult in slightly different ways (example: calling someone on the phone).</p> <p>Rank how difficult each step would be on a 0-10 scale (0 = totally easy; 10 = the most difficult you could imagine). Then put your steps in order from easiest to hardest.</p>
<p>4. Give it a try</p>	<p>Jump on in! Exposures feel scary at first but remember that's how we learn new things. If you feel stuck on a step, you can brainstorm a slightly easier step to help you get there. The goal is to face your fears, so you can start doing all the things you need to do, and matter to you.</p> <p>When you do something hard, make sure to celebrate!</p>

Sample Fear Ladders

Here are a few example exposure ladders for different targets. These examples provide an idea of how fear ladders work. They are not to be used as is. Make sure to make your own – Everyone’s fear ladder and ratings are unique to their own worries and goals.

Note that some ladders are arranged from easiest to hardest, and others are not. Both strategies are fine and work well.



Fear: Dogs

Pet a large dog off leash	9
Pet a small dog off leash	8
Pet a dog on a leash	8
Go to a pet store and view dogs in cages	7
View videos with sound on of large dogs	5
View videos of puppies	2
View pictures of dogs of all sizes	2

Anxiety (0-10)



Fear: Uncertainty

Go a whole day without checking social media	6
After missing school (due to vacation/illness) don’t find out what I missed until I see my teacher	9
Invite someone to hang out by text and then don’t check responses for 24 hours	9
Turn off phone for an hour	7
Take a new route somewhere without GPS/directions	5
Pack backpack the night before school and do not double check it the next morning	2

Anxiety (0-10)



Fear: Talking to People I Don't Know Anxiety (0-10)

Join a school club with a friend	4
Join a school club (show up alone)	8
Introduce myself to someone new	6
Greet someone new (smile/say hello)	5
Call a restaurant and order food	4
Join a club outside of school (show up alone)	9

Fear: Making Mistakes (Perfectionism) Anxiety (0-10)



Arrive 5 minutes late to hang out with a friend	4
Free write a school assignment for 15 minutes without stopping, erasing, or editing	7
Send an email with a spelling error in it	8
Wear my shirt inside out for the whole day	8
Make an intentional mistake on homework and turn it in	9
Do a coloring book activity and color outside the lines	3
Give myself a 2-minute limit to make an important decision	5

Fear: Riding the School Bus Anxiety (0-10)



Ride the bus alone to and from school all week	9
Ride the bus alone to and from school three days a week	8
Ride the bus to school one morning with a friend	7
Walk to the bus stop and wait for the bus but don't get on	5
Walk to the bus stop on a non-school day	4
Imagine that you are riding the bus while following bus in a car	3