

## **BUILDING INNER COURAGE AND MOVING FORWARD**

### **- Goal Setting Workshop -**

In order for us to develop our inner courage, move forward, overcome obstacles, and achieve the goals we dream about, we need to develop certain techniques which are detailed below.

#### **Step 1: Establishing our Goals.**

The first step is to establish your goals, some of these you will already instinctively know about. Maybe it is something simple like calling a family member or a friend you have not spoken to in a long-time or opening those bills you've been avoiding. You may be struggling with anxiety but want to be able to socialise in public with friends.

Whatever it is, write a list of your fears, challenges, and wants. The moment such thoughts come into your head write it down, on a piece of paper, in a memo app or remember it until you get home.

#### **Step 2: Establish an Exposure Hierarchy.**

Now that you have a list of goals, it is time to create an exposure hierarchy. What you need to do is list the goals in order of least to most terrifying. The power of an exposure hierarchy allows you to focus on the easier goals first and build momentum when achieving these, this momentum and increase in courage and confidence will allow you to focus on the next goal.

When you start a new goal, you need to create a new exposure hierarchy. Place that goal at the top of your hierarchy as the most terrifying and at the bottom of that hierarchy is where you are now. Between these two points we can now create mini goals that will allow us to achieve that major goal.

Here is an example.

Maybe you have social anxiety and have picked '**buying a coffee from a coffee-shop and sitting-in**' as the goal you want to tackle first on your list.

1. Buying a Coffee from a Coffee-shop and sitting-in (Most Terrifying).
2. ...
3. (Where I am now – Least Terrifying).

What we want to do is break down that large goal into smaller steps. Each step will depend on your subjective level of fear or worry. Some may worry about what to say when asking for an item, others may worry about the business of a shop and everything in between.

1. **Buying a Coffee from a Coffee-shop and sitting-in** (Most terrifying).
2. **This time switch-up the order- maybe a pumpkin spice latte with soya milk!**
3. **Go to the Coffee-shop and order at a busier time- same order.**
4. **Go to the Coffee-Shop at a time when it is least busy and order something basic- regular Cappuccino to go** (Google: “least busy times to go to a coffee-shop”).
5. **Walk past the shop- see how busy it is and where the counter is located** (a bit of reconnaissance 😬).
6. **(Where I am now – Least terrifying).**

Now you can see what may seem like a challenging step to someone can be broken down into much easier and manageable steps. In this instance, maybe an individual with a similar goal might want to add in a step where they have a friend accompany them as they order and then slowly work towards doing it on their own. For others it may a completely different goal, like opening bills/letters they have been putting off due to financial worries; setting small steps like creating half an hour in the day where they just tackle one letter for that day and contacting supports to being able open such letters and deal with them straight away.

### **Step 3: Use absolutely everything!**

Now the great thing about using an exposure hierarchy is that you are not limited, you are able to use this in conjunction with coping mechanisms and strategies. We have tips and techniques for managing anxiety and building resilience, confidence, and self-esteem on our website. Take a look!

When tackling each step in your exposure hierarchy combine it with coping strategies that work for you, using grounding techniques which help you when your anxiety is increased, or knowing what foods/drinks to avoid if they heighten your symptoms. Caffeinated drinks like coffee or some energy drinks can cause heart palpitations and trembling which if you are struggling with anxiety, can make things more difficult. Alcohol can have a depressant effect, and for those with depression this would ideally be avoided, but that small change could be the difference to you managing to do a daily walk which feeds into practicing other goals and coping strategies. It is about learning what works for us and then using them all to take small steps forward. Overtime, the more we practice this, the greater the difference in our mental wellbeing and the achievements we accomplish.

Now strategies that support our health-impairments can be subjective, what works for one may not work for another, but the key is in trying and learning what works and keeping note of what does.

Use the goal setting templates (whichever works best for you) to support you in trying to reach these goals).