



Your Tailored Plan to Overcome Your Anxiety

Your Tailored Plan To Overcome Your Anxiety

How to build your tailored plan to overcome anxiety

Consider working with a coach to develop this plan. You may have a higher success rate working with a coach, but you can also do this on your own.

To get started on overcoming your anxiety, let's identify your goals and develop a plan.

Note: We used public speaking and social anxiety examples in this document because many people have this anxiety. However, it's important to note that this plan can work for all anxieties. Just substitute your anxiety in the examples.

Step 1: What Do You Want To Achieve?

Goal Worksheet

Describe what you want to be able to do in the near-term and long-term.

- My short-term goal is to be able to (what would you see yourself do differently so you would know you met your goal?):

- My long-term goal is to be able to:
Or ask yourself: I will know that I've overcome my fear when:

Your Tailored Plan To Overcome Your Anxiety

Follow these guidelines as you develop your goals. Make your goals:

- Something concrete and specific that you can easily monitor and know whether you achieved it or not.
- Realistically attainable.
- Something under your control. State your goal in terms of your behavior (not someone else's) so it's in your control to achieve it.
- Based on overt behavior – not on how you are feeling. (Basing goals on how you feel is self-defeating because it assumes that the existence of bodily symptoms is an indicator of failure. Bodily symptoms happen inside and are often not visible to others, and you can function and be successful in the presence of fear.)

Your Tailored Plan To Overcome Your Anxiety

Step 2: Brainstorm Your Top Fears

Brainstorm your fears. Write all of the speaking and social situations that come to your mind below. Make them as specific as possible to your life. The reason we start by brainstorming is to make sure we capture as comprehensive a list as possible of your fearful situations.

My fears:

Your Tailored Plan To Overcome Your Anxiety

In case you need some help brainstorming your social or speaking fears, here are some ideas.

Being the center of attention:

- Give a speech or presentation
- Read out loud in front of a group of people
- Volunteer to be the person to present updates on projects at meetings
- Express an opinion at a meeting when you would normally say nothing
- Speak up in classes or meetings
- Ask a question during or after a presentation or lecture
- Answer questions in class
- Serve as the chairperson for a committee at work or as a volunteer
- Read scriptures or a prayer out loud in front of a congregation at a religious service
- Speak up in any kind of group
- Teach a class or lead training with a group of people
- Tell a joke or story to a group of people at a social gathering
- Perform music, sports, dancing or other activities in front of others
- Pose for photographs or be in a video
- Give a book report

Your Tailored Plan To Overcome Your Anxiety

- Present a paper at a scientific meeting
- Give a toast at a the wedding of a friend or parent's anniversary party
- Give a eulogy
- Present a plan at a staff meeting
- Offer an opinion on a controversial topic
- Present a committee report at a business meeting
- Read from a magazine, newspaper or religious text
- Introduce oneself and disclose personal information in a group
- Chair a meeting
- Train on a procedure
- Give workshops in one's area of expertise

Social interactions:

- Attend social gatherings like parties or networking receptions
- Introduce yourself to groups or strangers
- Initiate and maintain a conversation
- Call an old friend you haven't talked to in a while
- Make small talk with work colleagues

Your Tailored Plan To Overcome Your Anxiety

Embarrassing behaviors:

- Make a mistake in front of people
- Stammer or stutter in front of people
- Fall down in front of people

Your Tailored Plan To Overcome Your Anxiety

Step 3: Prioritize Your Fears

Use your brainstorm list to put your fears in priority order below.

1. Fill in your top 10 fears from your brainstorm list.
2. Rate each one on a scale from 0-100 where 0 means that you have no fear and 100 means that situation is the worst social/speaking fear you've ever experienced.

Top Fears Worksheet

Social Situation	Fear (1-100)
My top worst fear is:	
My 2nd worst fear is:	
My 3rd worst fear is:	
My 4th worst fear is:	
My 5th worst fear is:	

Your Tailored Plan To Overcome Your Anxiety

Social Situation	Fear (1-100)
My 6th worst fear is:	
My 7th worst fear is:	
My 8th worst fear is:	
My 9th worst fear is:	
My 10th worst fear is:	

Your Tailored Plan To Overcome Your Anxiety

Step 4: Design your Practice Sessions

When you are learning to swim, you start by gradually getting in the water in the shallow end, walking in the water, swimming in the shallow end, and then swimming in the deep end. With each step you develop more confidence. Think about “baby steps” as you design your practice sessions. Start with easier steps and move gradually toward more challenging steps. Each step should be achievable and should give you confidence to take the next more challenging step.

Plan your step hierarchy:

- What is the most difficult or fearful task?
- What is the least difficult task?



Now use your *Top Fears Worksheet* and fill out the *Step Hierarchy Worksheet* below. See the [Sample Step Hierarchy Worksheet](#) for assistance. Start with a task that you estimate would produce a 40-60 level fear and each task should be gradually more difficult. Remember that when you’re practicing, the tasks that are extremely challenging now will become less challenging as you go check off the tasks on your list.

Each individual is different, but most plans typically have about 10 steps but it could also take up to 50 steps or less than 5. There are no right or wrong number of steps.

Your Tailored Plan To Overcome Your Anxiety

Personal Practice Plan

My goal at the end of this course is: _____	
Steps/Activity	Fear Level (0-100)
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

Note that what is fearful to one person is not to another, and everyone's hierarchy will be different. It doesn't matter how small your start or what your first step is - the important thing is to start.

Once you complete your hierarchy, schedule some gradual practice exercises in a very gradual way. Work with a coach as needed.

Your Tailored Plan To Overcome Your Anxiety

SAMPLE - Goal & Hierarchy Worksheet

What is your long-term goal? What does success look like?

To be able to speak to a group of people spontaneously, or in a planned speaking situation, without overblown anxiety or panic. I would be able to manage the instinctual fear without it escalating to the imaginary fear. I would be able to communicate my message so that my audience understands what I am trying to communicate.

What is your short-term goal at the end of this course?

To be able to give a presentation at work and make three key points.

Your Tailored Plan To Overcome Your Anxiety

Sample Personal Practice Plan (hierarchy worksheet)

My goal at the end of this course: To give a 20 minute presentation at work with an audience of about 25 people and make 3 key points.	
Steps/Activity	Fear Level (0-100)
1. Introduce myself to a safe group. Include my first name, last name, and a little about myself. Do this three times or until I feel the anxiety going down.	45
2. Read a few paragraphs from a book or article in front of a mirror.	(Preparing for next step) Homework
3. Read a few paragraphs from a book or article to this group. Do this three times or until I feel the anxiety going down.	50
4. Once a week, tell a personal story to a group of people where you would normally stay quiet. Seek daily or near daily opportunities to speak briefly in a group or meeting and be the center of attention.	55 Homework
5. Give a 5-minute prepared speech introducing myself in front of a mirror.	(Preparing for next step) Homework
6. Give a 5-minute prepared speech introducing myself to this group. Do this three times or until I feel the anxiety going down.	60
7. Volunteer to work in a group or on a committee where I am expected to introduce myself to the group and participate in discussions.	65 Homework
8. Give a 5-minute speech on a topic of great interest to me using PowerPoint slides to this group. Do this three times or until I feel the anxiety	65

Your Tailored Plan To Overcome Your Anxiety

going down.	
9. Give a 5-minute speech on a topic of great interest to me without slides or notes to this group. Do this three times or until I feel the anxiety going down.	70
10. Make a brief presentation in a reasonably safe setting.	70 Homework
11. Give a 10-minute speech to this group. Do this three times or until I feel the anxiety going down.	75
12. Make a brief presentation of some type. This could be an informal presentation such as making 2-3 points at a community meeting. Continue daily or near daily opportunities to speak briefly in a group or meeting.	75 Homework
13. Give a 20-minute speech to this group. Do this three times or until I feel the anxiety going down.	80
14. Give a 20 minute presentation at work with about 25 people and make 3 key points.	90 Homework

Your Tailored Plan To Overcome Your Anxiety

At The End of This Course

At the end of this course, use your long-term goal to create another step hierarchy. So you'll have a plan for your short-term goals and a plan for your long-term goal.

Step Hierarchy Worksheet

My long-term goal is: _____	
Activity	Fear Level (0-100)
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	