

Professional Webinar, Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA)

HOW TO HELP CLIENTS OVERCOME SOCIAL ANXIETY:

Part 1: January 13, 2017, 12-1pm Eastern
FIVE COGNITIVE-BEHAVIORAL STRATEGIES

Part 2: February 10, 2017, 12-1pm Eastern
USING EXPOSURES AS EXPERIMENTS TO BUILD SELF-CONFIDENCE

Resources:

NATIONAL SOCIAL ANXIETY CENTER (NSAC): nationalsocialanxietycenter.com. Monthly social anxiety blog for consumers. Clinical education, peer consultation and research summaries for clinicians. Currently has 9 regional clinics: District of Columbia; San Francisco; Los Angeles; Pittsburgh; New York City; Chicago; Newport Beach / Orange County; Houston / Sugar Land; St. Louis. **Email NSAC Chair, Larry Cohen, to inquire about the benefits and requirements of affiliating with NSAC as either a Regional Clinic or an Associate:** larrycohen@socialanxietyhelp.com.

WORKSHEETS & INSTRUCTION SHEETS (attached): use and modify these as you wish.

THERAPIST MANUALS, TRAINING & TOOLS ON SOCIAL ANXIETY:

Mangaging Social Anxiety: A Cognitive-Behavioral Approach, by Debra Hope, Richard Heimberg and Cynthia Turk. There is both a Therapist Guide and a client Workbook.
Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Social Anxiety Disorder, by Stefan Hofmann and Michael Otto.
CBT for Social Anxiety, trainings on CDs & DVDs by Christine Padesky, store.padesky.com.
Attention Training Technique, audio exercises and instructions by Adrian Wells, mct-institute.com/attention-training-technique

FOR SOCIALLY ANXIOUS CONSUMERS:

Rejection Therapy Game, dozens of ideas for paradoxical experiments by Jason Comely, rejectiontherapy.com/game.
Comfort Zone Crusher, online community with a series of paradoxical experiment challenges, by Till Gross, comfortzonecrusher.com.
Social Anxiety Support: online discussions and information, socialanxiety-support.com.
International Paruresis Association & The Shy Bladder Center, online discussions and information, intensive treatment weekends and referrals, paruresis.org.
Social Anxiety Institute, online discussion and information, online treatment program for individuals and self-help groups, referrals, socialanxietyinstitute.org.
Andrew Kukes Foundation for Social Anxiety, online information and referrals, clinical videos for both consumers and providers, akfsa.org.
The Shyness & Social Anxiety Workbook, by Martin Antony and Richard Swinson.
Mangaging Social Anxiety: Workbook, by Debra Hope, Richard Heimberg and Cynthia Turk.
The Mindfulness and Acceptance Workbook for Social Anxiety and Shyness, by Jan Fleming, Nancy Kocovski and Zindel Segal.
The Shyness & Social Anxiety Workbook for Teens, by Jennifer Shannon.
Stopping the Noise in Your Head: The New Way to Overcome Anxiety & Worry, by Reid Wilson, featuring the Anxiety Game, not specific to social anxiety.
Social anxiety support groups: there are many; do searches for your region in meetup.com, groups.google.com and groups.yahoo.com.

Core fear of social anxiety: JUDGMENT (embarrassment, criticism, rejection)

Anxiety formula:

$$\text{anxiety intensity} = \frac{(\text{threat likelihood} \times \text{threat severity}) + \text{physiology}}{\text{coping}}$$

Categories of social anxiety triggers:

**SOCIAL (CONVERSATION)
PERFORMANCE
BEING OBSERVED**

Elements of social anxiety: BEFORE, DURING & AFTER a trigger

**Cognitive: hot thoughts, underlying assumptions, core beliefs
Behavioral: safety seeking behaviors (including avoidance)
Emotions & physical sensations**

SOME IDEAS FOR SOCIAL ANXIETY EXPERIMENTS

SOCIAL, FRIENDSHIP, DATING

➔ Some settings in which you can do the following experiments include: the job; a park; a book store; a pet store; the National Zoo; the National Mall; a shopping mall; friendly grocery stores; a bar/club; a coffee shop; a restaurant; a museum; a “meetup” or other organizational activity; a volunteer activity; a committee; a political/activist group/event; a social/recreational/hobby group; a group sports/athletic activity; a group hike/run; a singles event; the gym; a party; before/after a religious service; before/after a class; before/after a support group/12-step group; attending a lecture/tour; waiting for or on a bus/train/plane; a conference; a festival or other community event; standing in line.

➔ Look for groups & activities in which to do experiments: **group volunteering** (onebrick.org; volunteermatch.org; singlevolunteers.org; idealist.org; gayforgood.org); **general social activities** (meetup.com; dcfray.com, projectdcevents.com, eventbrite.com; gravy.com; meetin.org; thingstododc.com; prosinthecity.com; goldstar.com; internationalclubdc.com; lotsofevents.com; livingsocial.com; livingliberally.org; playnakid.com; kickball.com; Wash. City Paper; Wash. Post weekend section; the Smithsonian, Phillips Gallery & other museums; patc.net [group hikes]; groups.google.com; groups.io); **LGBT activity calendars & organization listings** (thedccenter.org/events.html; metroweekly.com/community/calendar; meetup.com/GoGayDC; do search on LGBT in meetup.com; thedccenter.org/organizations; teamdc.org/team-links [athletic groups]; gayforgood.org [volunteering]; otherpages.com/sub-category/community-resources.html).

- make eye contact, smile and say hi to many strangers
- initiate brief conversations with multiple strangers
- greet & start conversations with multiple strangers you are attracted to
- prolong conversations with strangers/acquaintances longer than you normally would
- join a small group conversation already started where people are mingling
- talk to strangers one-on-one using the DialUp app
- reveal more about yourself in conversation than you normally do
- ask someone out socially or on a date that you have just met
- invite friends/acquaintances/group members to do something social (individually or as a small group)
- host a dinner, party or other social activity for friends/group members at your home
- call friends/group members up just to talk
- place/respond to personal ads/profiles online and in publications; then have follow-up phone calls & dates
- participate in a speed dating event (where you talk to many people briefly, one-on-one)
- ask people to dance at a social event, club or dance class, then strike up conversations with them
- express yourself more freely/exuberantly (eg. in conversing, telling a story, dancing, cheering at an event)

BEING AMONG STRANGERS

- eat at a restaurant alone
- go alone to a movie, shopping mall or crowded store
- use a public bathroom
- walk in crowded neighborhoods
- go on crowded buses/trains
- write in front of people (e.g. writing checks in a store checkout line; writing on the blackboard in a class)
- eat in front of people (e.g. at a common table in a cafeteria; with a group of friends at a restaurant)

ASSERTION

- express a contrary opinion
- suggest to friends where you would like to eat, what movie you would like to see, etc.
- tell a waiter you don't like something or want something replaced
- take an item you purchased back for a return
- tell a coworker or boss when you disagree or don't like something they did
- ask for a raise/promotion
- tell a friend/partner/relative/group member when you feel hurt/upset

- tell someone you're interested in how you really feel about him/her
- turn down a request for assistance
- ask for assistance
- ask to borrow something
- tell someone when you are offended by what they said
- come out to someone as lesbian/gay/bi/trans
- compliment people (friends, acquaintances and/or strangers)
- tell people something positive about yourself

PERFORMING

- participate in Toastmasters at different levels (just attend, table topics, specific roles, prepared speeches)
- speak up more at work/organizational/support-group meetings
- lead work/organizational/support-group meetings
- give a presentation or workshop
- job interviews and informational interviews
- make a series of work-related, volunteer-related or information-gathering phone calls
- perform in karaoke night, open-mike night, choir, community theater/dance, etc.
- dance when there are no/few others on the dance floor
- take a class on public speaking, acting, music, singing, dance
- call in on a radio talk show

PARADOXICAL EXPERIMENTS

- make mistakes or do a mediocre job on purpose, as long as you do not harm others (eg. at work, in conversation, in emails, when hosting a dinner party or other social activity)
- pretend to forget an acquaintance's name when you actually remember
- have friendly conversations with strangers with the goal of being rejected by multiple people
- go to a bar and politely compliment multiple people (whether or not you're not interested in them); wish them a nice evening and move on to the next person regardless of their response to you
- ask multiple people "stupid questions" on purpose
- ask multiple people for directions to an obvious location you are already at (eg. Dupont Circle or the Capitol)
- order a coffee; when the server gives it to you ask if it's decaf, and then unapologetically say you want decaf
- bring items to a checkout line in a store then, after it is rung up, unapologetically say you don't have any money and won't be able to buy them
- go to restaurant or bar and only order tap water; drink the water, thank the server & leave without apology
- go to a hotel, ask about their cancellation policy, and book a hotel room; just after doing so, unapologetically explain you changed your mind and cancel the room
- go to a store, ask for assistance to find an item, then buy it; immediately return the item, unapologetically saying that you changed your mind
- draw attention to yourself in public settings by acting foolish
- speak at Toastmasters unprepared, and perhaps make mistakes on purpose
- sing at karaoke if you are not a good singer, or if you are completely unprepared
- do some other activity in public that you are not good at: eg juggling, singing or playing guitar on a street corner; put out a hat for donations
- sing loudly as you walk around the National Mall or other crowded location; look people in the eye
- stand in a crowded Metro train and loudly announce each stop ahead of time
- walk backwards slowly in a crowded location for 5 minutes
- dress poorly, or obviously unmatched, or have a very visible stain on your clothing while at work or a social event; make sure you look people in the eye
- wear your shirt inside out and buttoned incorrectly in a crowded store, and look many people in the eye
- in a bar or other public gathering place, ask others to offer criticism, and thank them gratefully for it
- attend a meeting of a group, and calmly express an opinion that is greatly contrary to theirs
- occasionally express contrary opinions with individuals (eg. about restaurants, movies, politics, religion) when you do not care, just for the sake of disagreeing with others
- go to a bar or other public gathering place and politely ask multiple people to go on a date with you; regardless of their response, politely thank them and move on to the next person; the goal is to collect rejections & normalize them
- ask multiple people for help or for favors you do not need, with the goal of collecting rejections; thank them
- ask multiple strangers to have their pictures taken with you, with the goal of collecting rejections; thank them
- tell people unapologetically you are anxious, even when you are not (eg. in conversations, meetings, radio call-ins)
- exaggerate or even create your anxiety symptoms on purpose (eg. sweating, blushing, jitteriness, light-headedness, dizziness, voice quivering) while you interact with people and look them in the eye

Even More Ideas for Social Anxiety Experiments

From: *Exposure Therapy for Anxiety: Principles and Practice*, by Jonathan S. Abramowitz, Brett J. Deacon and Stephen P. H. Whiteside, p. 163. (The Guilford Press, New York, 2011.)

TABLE 9.3. Examples of Exposure Exercises for Social Concerns

Type of concern	Exposure stimuli
Being in public	Shop in a crowded store, attend a concert or sporting event, read in a public place, work out at a gym, walk in a public place and make eye contact with others
Being the center of attention	Answer a question in class, drop change in public, speak loudly, wear unusual or out-of-place clothing (e.g., sombrero, mismatched outfit), join an aerobics class
Interacting with others	Speak to strangers, ask others for the time, strike up conversations with store employees, attend a social event, have friends over for a get-together, speak to friends on the phone, join a club or organization
Performing in front of others	Exercise in a crowded gym, give a speech, make a toast, eat alone in a crowded restaurant, sign a check or fill out an application with others watching, speak up at a meeting, interview for a job
Displaying anxiety reactions in front of others	Interact with others or go to a public place (1) while stuttering, pausing, or mumbling; (2) immediately following vigorous exercise; (3) with water splashed on armpit area of shirt to simulate sweating; (4) with hands noticeably trembling or shaking
Conflict	Return an item at a store, send food back at a restaurant, drive slowly in the left lane, pretend to forget money when purchasing an item, slowly use an ATM machine with others waiting
Appearing foolish in front of others	Ask for directions to an obvious location, order an item at a restaurant that is obviously not on the menu, incorrectly answer a question in class, purposely mispronounce a word during a conversation, slip or fall down while walking in a crowded area, drop a handful of coins on the floor in a shopping mall, attempt to purchase an item without sufficient money, engage a stranger in a conversation while trying to be as boring as possible or while making foolish statements, stand at a urinal in a public restroom and feign the inability to urinate (for male clients), call out the floors while riding in a crowded elevator

Paradoxical Experiments 43

TABLE 2.1 Examples of In Vivo Exposure Tasks to Challenge Estimated Social Cost

- Ask multiple people (e.g., 10 people over a half hour) in a specific and obvious location (e.g., immediately outside Fenway Park) where to find that location. Say: *Excuse me, I am looking for Fenway Park.*
- Order a sandwich at a takeout restaurant and then tell the cashier you cannot buy it because you do not have enough money. Say without apologizing: *I just realized that I forgot my wallet,* then walk out.
- Order a coffee at a coffee bar and when it is handed to you, say: *Is this decaf?* Add without apologizing: *I would like to have mine decaf.*
- Order a bagel, “accidentally” drop it on the floor and ask for a new one. Say: *I just dropped the bagel on the floor. Could I please have a new one?*
- Go to a restaurant and sit at the bar. When asked if you would like to order something, just ask for tap water. Use the bathroom and then leave without saying anything.
- Go to a restaurant and sit at the bar. Ask a fellow patron whether he has seen the movie *When Harry Met Sally* and who the actors were.
- Go to a hotel and book a room. Walk outside and immediately back in and cancel the room because you *changed your mind.*
- Go to a video rental outlet and rent a DVD. Walk out and immediately back in requesting to return it saying: *I forgot I don't have a DVD player.*
- Stand in a subway station (specify location) and sing “God Bless America” for 30 minutes.
- Ask a female pharmacist for some condoms. When she brings them, ask: *Is this the smallest size you have?*
- Go to every man sitting at a table in a crowded restaurant and ask: *Are you Carl Smith?*
- Go to a bookstore and ask a clerk: *Excuse me, where can I find some books on farting.*
- Ask a bookstore clerk for the following two books: *The Karma Sutra* and *The Joy of Sex.* Ask the clerk which one he would recommend.
- Buy a book and immediately return it because you *changed your mind.*
- Ask the book clerk for his/her opinion about a particular best-seller. Ask: *What did you like about this book, and how many copies have you sold.* Don't buy it. Simply say: *Thank you. I will think about it* and leave.
- Ask a book clerk for a book for a 1-year-old. Find out if and how many children the clerk has, how old they are, what school they attend or attended, and what their favorite color is.
- Go to Store 24, buy a *Playgirl* magazine, and ask the store clerk: *Are there also pictures of naked men in the magazine?* Wait for the answer and put it back on the shelf.
- Wear your shirt backward and inside out and buttoned incorrectly in a crowded store. Goal: Look three people in the eye.
- Walk backward slowly in a crowded street for 3 minutes.

from "Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Social Anxiety Disorder" by Stefan Hofmann + Michael Otto 129

TABLE 6.3 Interoceptive Exposure Exercises to Enhance Social Exposures

Symptom Induction Exercise	Goal and Strategies
Hyperventilation—rapid once-per-second breathing	As long as the patient works to “blow off air” with each breath, a dry throat is achieved within a few seconds. This procedure alone is useful for individuals fearing a dry throat/mouth during a speech. It requires patients to have to cope through this symptom at the beginning of a speech, focusing on meeting their goals despite this difficulty. With longer inductions (30–60 seconds), a fuller panoply of symptoms can be induced (lightheadedness, flushing, numbness, and tingling) as is useful for individuals with concerns about paniclike responses to their social stressors.
Running up stairs (several flights) or running in place for 30 seconds	This procedure will produce the out-of-breath and “heavy legs” sensations that some patients fear will prevent a coherent speech or discussion. Again, performance despite this symptom is the goal. This procedure is also very useful for the subtype of individuals who fail to pause and breathe at the natural pauses in a discussion (i.e., at the commas and periods in a presentation). Without these pauses, patients may drive increasing amounts of breathlessness. Inducing breathlessness, but also instructing patients to allow pauses between sentences in their presentations, can help them develop a natural cadence of speaking despite the presence of symptoms.
Sitting with head between the knees (be mindful of orthostatic hypotension if patients rise from this position too quickly)	Due to the blood rushing to the head, this procedure can produce sensations of or actual flushing responses. With physician approval, a more prolonged flushing response can also be induced with 200 mg of niacin (vitamin B3) taken on a full stomach.
Staring into a mirror into one's own eyes (hand mirror held 6 inches away)	This procedure can produce sensations of derealization and disorientation, which can be useful for individuals with fears of losing one's train of thought in a social setting (speech or conversation).

Paradoxical experiment ideas from "The Shyness & Social Anxiety Workbook for Teens," by Jennifer Shannon

Here are some examples for Liz, Brandon, and Bella.

Liz thinks she is boring. She is afraid to draw attention to herself for fear that others will judge her. What does she do?

- She makes a list of boring topics and then talks and texts about them.
- She interrupts people on purpose.
- She yells across the hall to say hi to someone.



Brandon is worried he will say something wrong and make a fool of himself. What does he do?

- He orders something that he knows the restaurant doesn't serve.
- He calls someone by the wrong name on purpose.
- He mispronounces someone's name.



Bella is afraid people will notice she's blushing. What does she do?

- She rubs her cheeks hard before talking to people or making a presentation.
- She wears extra blush.
- She makes certain everyone notices her blushing, even if she has to point it out.

Here are some other above-and-beyond ideas:

- Spray water under your arms and on your forehead to mimic excessive sweat.
- Make your hands shake while you are drinking something.
- At the gym, count your reps out loud so everyone can hear.
- At your favorite clothing store, try on clothes inside out and ask the clerk how you look.
- At a convenience store, pay with a pocketful of change.
- When the teacher asks the class a question, raise your hand and answer it wrong.
- Call a pet store and ask if they sell dog food.
- Walk into a movie theater and sit in front of someone after the movie has started. Or set your phone alarm to go off an hour into the movie.
- Buy an ice cream cone, drop it, and ask for another one for free.

You get the idea. If the thought of it makes you feel anxious, chances are it would be a great exposure.

COGNITIVE-BEHAVIORAL EXPERIMENTS FOR OVERCOMING SOCIAL ANXIETY

How to Do Them Effectively

- 1. Pick your experiments strategically.** First, pick an experiment that could help bring you a little closer to achieving one of your personal therapy goals. Then consider whether your experiment idea feels too high or too low on your Fear & Avoidance Hierarchy. If it feels really quite scary, you may want to pick something in the same direction that feels a bit easier as your next step. If your experiment idea seems quite easy, then find something that confronts your fears a bit more. You may get specific experiment ideas from the blue sheet and the internet resources listed on the 2nd paragraph of that sheet. If an important experiment you have recently done still feels quite difficult, then do it repeatedly until you feel more confident.
- 2. Choose both proactive experiments, as well as reactive ones.** Proactive experiments are those in which you are going out of our way to do a challenging activity you were not already going to do in order to help you reach your personal therapy goals. Reactive experiments are when you turn challenging situations you already experience in your life into experiments by following the steps on this instruction sheet. Both proactive and reactive experiments will help you make progress. However, proactive experiments are (more or less) doubly therapeutic because the very act of choosing to go out of your way to challenge your fears is a step forward in overcoming those fears!
- 3. Experiments are aimed at learning: by testing hypotheses and gathering evidence.** One of the main reasons for doing these experiments is to test the validity of the hot thoughts that make you feel socially anxious and otherwise upset. Later in therapy, you will also use experiments to test the validity of your underlying core beliefs about yourself and how others relate to you. We are using the scientific method here, where an experiment is conducted in order to generate evidence supporting or refuting your hypotheses: your hot thoughts and core beliefs. Therefore, it is important that the experiments you choose trigger your typical socially anxious hot thoughts (and underlying core beliefs).
- 4. Complete the first three columns of the Experiment Worksheet (EW) before doing your experiment, or before a series of repeated experiments.** In the 2nd column, make sure you identify your hot thoughts (and core beliefs), and the ***specific feared predictions*** they generate: what exactly you fear may happen during the experiment. In the 3rd column, identify your specific behavioral goals for the experiment (including external mindful focus): what exactly you plan to do during the experiment to drop your safety seeking behaviors and to test your hot thoughts (and core beliefs). Ideally choose the opposite of your safety-seeking behaviors among your behavioral goals for the experiment. But consider your Fear & Avoidance Hierarchy: modifying your goals can greatly affect how anxious you feel about doing the experiment.
- 5. OPTIONAL: Complete the Cognitive Restructuring Worksheet (CRW) before doing the experiment if it triggers a lot of anticipatory anxiety and worry, or you are not certain you can get yourself to do it.** Make sure you write several positive motivators—how you expect to benefit by doing the experiment—so that you feel more motivated to carry your experiment out and overcome the inclination to avoid. Then copy the constructive attitude (CA), (including positive motivators and short version) and your behavioral goals onto a file card or smart phone, and carry this with you before and during the experiment. At least a few times before the experiment—and whenever you find yourself worrying about it—read your CA (including positive motivators and short version) and your behavioral goals out loud and with oomph / conviction. You may wish to make and periodically listen to an audio recording of yourself reading your CA and goals with oomph. It is also helpful to silently repeat the short version of the CA a few times daily so that it can quickly come to your mind when doing your experiment. You can probably further lessen your anticipatory anxiety and worry if you write out a debate or argument between your CA and your hot thoughts before you do your experiment. Make it a vehement, lively exchange, and make sure your CA wins the debate! This debate can also be acted out with oomph in a therapy session.
- 6. Think about frequency and duration when choosing experiments and setting goals.** Ideally do some short experiments every day so that it feels like a regular part of your life. Also do at least one long experiment of at least 60 minutes duration each week so you give yourself the opportunity for more practice and to get more absorbed in the conversation or activity. It is best to not stop an experiment before you have carried out your behavioral goals, so don't make your goals too hard or not fully in your control. If the

experiment is inherently a brief one, it is generally more effective to pick a setting that allows you to do this frequently in a relatively short amount of time, or to do it a few times every day. Try to do your experiment, and try to complete your goals within the experiment, as soon as possible, because avoidance / procrastination actually *increases* your anxiety for later! Also, aim to spend at least two hours per week doing experiments so that you get enough practice to make good progress.

7. **OPTIONAL: Use confident imagery to lessen your anticipatory anxiety about your experiment.** Close your eyes and imagine yourself in the setting of your experiment, making the scene as detailed and vivid as possible. If you have difficulty imagining the experiment, try closing your eyes and silently narrating the scene in vivid detail, using the present tense (I am..., I see...) In your imagery, first let yourself feel much of the anxiety you would feel during the actual experiment. Then imagine yourself feeling increasingly confident while you carry out your experiment goals. Don't script or practice what you are going to say because that's a self-defeating safety-seeking behavior. Just imagine yourself pursuing your behavioral goals, over and over again, with increasing confidence each time. Repeat this imagery exercise on multiple days until you feel increasingly confident. Later, bring up an image of yourself doing this experiment with a sense of confidence just before actually doing the experiment in real life.
8. **OPTIONAL: Practice head-held-high (HHH) assertion.** Although our worst social fears seldom materialize, we can lessen our anxiety and increase our self-confidence by practicing how we would handle it if your fears were to come true. If you still have a lot of anticipatory anxiety about an experiment after doing the CRW (#5) or confident imagery (#7), then complete the Head-Held-High Assertion worksheet about your feared predictions. Write these assertions on a card or in your smart phone, carry them with you. Then repeatedly practice reciting your assertions out loud and with oomph / conviction, like an actor getting increasingly into the role while practicing. You may wish to make and periodically listen to an audio recording of yourself reading your assertions with oomph. Also repeatedly practice using these assertions while doing confident imagery of your experiment (#7): imagine your fear coming true during an experiment, and you responding using your assertions with increasing oomph and conviction. Continue practicing your assertions in any and all of these ways until you feel confident you can handle your fears coming true.
9. **If you can't do the original experiment, do another one.** If fear or circumstances prevent you from doing what you had planned, then do another experiment. Baby steps are fine; just keep moving forward! Avoidance provides temporary relief, but it strengthens your anxiety for the next time.
10. **During the experiment:** Do not drink alcohol or take tranquilizers or beta blockers just before or during an experiment, or you probably will not gain self-confidence. During the experiment, focus mindfully: get absorbed in the conversation and activity in the moment, while defusing from your negative thoughts and feelings (treating them like background noise). Finally, if you're running into great difficulty, take a cognitive restructuring break (eg. in the bathroom): identify and challenge your distorted thoughts and self-defeating behaviors; then come up with a constructive attitude (CA) and a few behavioral goals to work on when you return to the activity. Or just read your CA and behavioral goals if you brought them with you (#5). Then return to the experiment, focus mindfully, and carry out your behavioral goals
11. **After the experiment, be a compassionate, good parent or friend to yourself.** 1st step: congratulate yourself for what you did. Identify the specific helpful things you did. Do not disqualify the positive. DO NOT RUMINATE about what you think went wrong. Instead, pat yourself on your back for the positive things you did, and be SPECIFIC. Savor your victory, no matter how small! 2nd step: instead of criticizing yourself, turn any problems that occurred into a constructive learning experience by identifying what you want to do differently the next time. Treating yourself with compassion, like a good parent or friend would, not only feels better; it helps you build self-confidence and make more progress more rapidly. Beating yourself up is a step backwards because it lowers self-confidence and will increase social anxiety for the next time.
12. **After the experiment, complete the last 2 columns of the Experiment Worksheet.** Doing so will help you learn from the experiment, decrease your belief in your socially anxious hot thoughts and core beliefs, and increase your self-confidence. If you find yourself ruminating about what you think went badly in the experiment, and you've already tried being a good parent/friend to yourself (#11), then complete a Cognitive Restructuring Worksheet about having done your experiment in order to counter your perfectionistic thinking, and to counter your mental filtering onto the negative while disqualifying the positive.

Paradoxical Experiments for Social Anxiety

- ***Identify the feared outcomes that your hot thoughts are so concerned about***, eg.: judgment, criticism, rejection, embarrassment, mistakes, social blunders, calling attention to yourself, or being visibly anxious. Then ***choose a series of experiments in which you paradoxically make it your goal to deliberately seek out the feared outcomes, ideally repeatedly***. For example, make it your goal to be rejected. Or make a mistake on purpose. Or do foolish things in public. Or deliberately ask a “stupid” question. Or dare to be mediocre (do a B job rather than an A job on a particular task). Or purposely under-dress or wear obviously stained clothing. Or “accidentally” drop a handful of coins on the floor in a meeting, class, or public setting. Or tell people when you are feeling anxious. Or create anxiety-like symptoms on purpose (eg. sweating, blushing, jittering, fidgeting, swallowing) when interacting with people. Or ask for help or favors when that are likely to be refused.
 - Complete the first 3 columns of an Experiment Worksheet before doing these experiments. (If you are feeling very anxious about doing these experiments and are unsure you can get yourself to carry them out, then also complete a Cognitive Restructuring Worksheet to lessen your anticipatory anxiety and increase your motivation.) Make sure you write out your hot thoughts (and perhaps your underlying core beliefs), including your specific feared predictions of how others will react to you during these experiments.
 - Also before conducting these experiments, complete a Head-Held-High Assertion Worksheet in which you write proactive assertions to use right after doing your paradoxical experiments. Practice your assertions using any of the following: recite your assertions out loud with a tone of confidence and conviction, optionally making a recording of this to listen to; or practice imagery of your fears coming true and you responding confidently using your assertions.
- ⇒ *When conducting your paradoxical experiments, focus mindfully and use your HHH assertion (or adapt it) whenever possible. Try using your assertion proactively, even if the person does not react badly to you (eg. “Don’t mind me, I’m sometimes awkward when talking to new people.”) Using your assertion proactively helps you build self-confidence and gather evidence to test your hot thoughts. Make sure you are a “good parent to yourself” after each repetition of the experiment, congratulating yourself for each positive thing you did and the courage it took. Do not criticize yourself for any problem. Instead, just identify what you can learn from this experiment that you want to do differently the next time. Then complete the last 2 columns of the Experiment Worksheet after each set of experiments.*
- Believe it or not, rather than being devastating or humiliating, paradoxical experiments will likely become fun and liberating. You will generally make the most progress if you ***do these experiments repeatedly: ideally, a few times in a row involving different people, or at least once daily on multiple days***. This allows you to garner much evidence to test your hot thoughts and underlying core beliefs. You will also likely experience your anxiety lessening over time, and see how it is transformed into a sense of strength, liberation and fun.
 - These experiments take courage and self-determination, certainly. But you do not have to be heroic. Take a series of small steps. If something feels too hard or risky to do, then find something lower on your fear and avoidance hierarchy to do in that same direction. You may find it easier and more fun to do some of these experiments with friends or therapy group co-members. Do the experiment repeatedly until it is less difficult. Then work your way up your fear hierarchy to do more challenging experiments. Keep pushing yourself. Ultimately, the bolder your experiments, the freer you will become of your fears.

FEAR & AVOIDANCE HIERARCHY

Name _____ Date _____ Page _____

SUDS (Subjective Units of Discomfort Scale)

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
no discomfort mild discomfort moderate discomfort great discomfort severe discomfort

Avoidance Rating

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
never avoid
avoid occasionally avoid often avoid usually avoid always

Situation _____

SUDS _____ Avoidance _____

Situation _____

SUDS _____ Avoidance _____

Situation _____

SUDS _____ Avoidance _____

Situation _____

SUDS _____ Avoidance _____

Situation _____

SUDS _____ Avoidance _____

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Situation _____

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Situation _____

SUDS _____ Avoidance _____

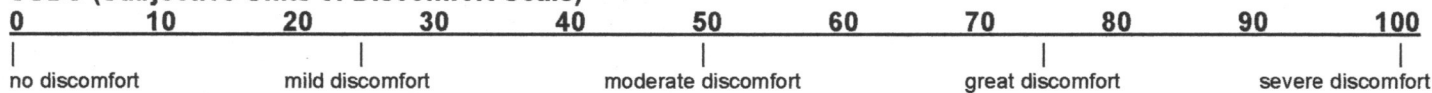
Situation _____

SUDS _____ Avoidance _____

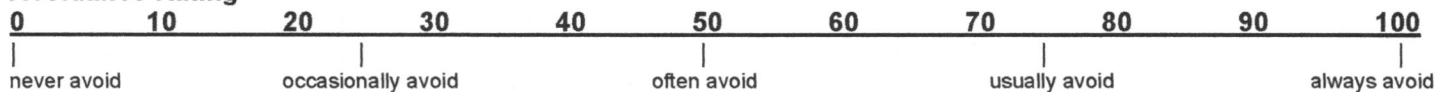
FEAR & AVOIDANCE HIERARCHY

Name _____ Date _____ Page 1

SUDS (Subjective Units of Discomfort Scale)



Avoidance Rating



- Situation** --asking an attractive person I know just a little out on a first date
SUDS 100 Avoidance 100
- Situation** --conversing with an attractive stranger; I initiate the conversation
SUDS 100 Avoidance 100
- Situation** --giving a presentation in front of a large group of mainly strangers
SUDS 95 Avoidance 75
- Situation** --asserting myself with a supervisor or other person in authority
SUDS 90 Avoidance 100
- Situation** --giving a presentation in front of a small group where I know some people
SUDS 85 Avoidance 60
- Situation** --conversing with an attractive stranger; the stranger initiates the conversation
SUDS 85 Avoidance 20
- Situation** --initiating physical intimacy with someone I'm attracted to (for the first time with that person)
SUDS 80 Avoidance 75
- Situation** --mingling with a small group at a social activity, mainly with strangers
SUDS 75 Avoidance 90
- Situation** --asserting myself with a friend I'm upset at
SUDS 75 Avoidance 50
- Situation** --speaking up at a meeting or class
SUDS 70 Avoidance 90

(over)

FEAR & AVOIDANCE HIERARCHY

Name _____ Date _____ Page 2

SUDS (Subjective Units of Discomfort Scale)

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
| no discomfort | mild discomfort | moderate discomfort | great discomfort | severe discomfort

Avoidance Rating

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
| never avoid | occasionally avoid | often avoid | usually avoid | always avoid

Situation --coming out to an acquaintance

SUDS 65 Avoidance 65

Situation --on a first date with someone I'm attracted to

SUDS 65 Avoidance 25

Situation --at a bar or large party where I know hardly anyone there

SUDS 60 Avoidance 75

Situation --running into an acquaintance (not a good friend)

SUDS 55 Avoidance 75

Situation --asserting myself with a stranger (e.g. a waiter)

SUDS 55 Avoidance 50

Situation --eating or writing in front of other people

SUDS 50 Avoidance 60

Situation --attending a small party or other small social gathering where I know everyone

SUDS 45 Avoidance 25

Situation --attending an organization's meeting or social/volunteer activity for my first time

SUDS 65 Avoidance 60

Situation --walking down a street, or going to a store or Metro train, with a lot of people there

SUDS 40 Avoidance 25

Situation --working out at the gym, or going to swimming pool

SUDS 35 Avoidance 25

MINDFULNESS PRACTICE FOR SOCIAL ANXIETY

Mindfulness: paying attention to something in the present moment with curiosity rather than judgment.

Thought defusion: being aware of your thoughts and feelings without becoming involved with them.

External mindfulness for social anxiety: paying attention with curiosity (taking interest) in the conversation, person, activity and/or situation in the present moment, while treating your thoughts and feelings like background noise. Get absorbed, engrossed, lost in the conversation or activity. Focus on what you see and hear (touch, taste, smell), rather than what you feel and think. *Get out of your head and into the moment.*

Curiosity training while observing:

- Daily watch one or more of these attention training videos. Start with videos 6-8, then watch 1-5: youtube.com/playlist?list=PLjGQ1qp_IGNW8OdES0K5pITPvz4pVPp0d. Get absorbed in all that you see and hear in these videos, while treating your thoughts and feelings as background noise. Gently return your attention to what you see and hear whenever you're distracted.
- Watch this music video about a socially anxious high school senior (Waving Through a Window from the musical, *Dear Evan Hansen*): youtube.com/watch?v=REIOnCTwjF0. Optionally watch any other music video of your choice. Slowly alternate your focus on the lyrics, the instruments, the different singers and actors. Watch the video again and switch your focus to different elements. Get engrossed in what you see and hear. Treat your thoughts and feelings as background noise.
- When you tire of the recordings, go into a location with a variety of sounds and sights, and ideally including people you are not interacting with. Spend 10 minutes or so closely paying attention to what you see and hear, slowly alternating your focus from one sight or sound to another. Treat any thoughts and feelings you may have as background noise.
- For all of the above, daily log the per cent mindful you were each time you practice.

Curiosity training while participating:

- Every day for at least 5 minutes, focus mindfully (with an attitude of curiosity as opposed to judgment) during conversations you are in. **Get absorbed / lost in the conversation.** Treat your thoughts and feelings like background noise.
- Make sure you put yourself in such situations daily so you can practice.
- Ideally start with conversations in which you are pretty comfortable. Proceed to conversations you are more anxious about as you get better at this. Consider signing up for anonymous conversations with eager strangers through the **dialup** app.
- Adopt an attitude of curiosity: ie. take interest in the person(s) and what they are saying.
- Practice this gently, patiently and persistently; don't criticize yourself or strain to be perfect at this.
- Optional: silently say "mindful," "curious," or "background noise" when you slip and focus on thoughts or feelings; then return your attention to the conversation or activity in the moment. Or simply return your attention to what you see and hear without using the silent word.
- If you have difficulty remembering to practice, **turn your social anxiety into a cue:** whenever you feel anxious during an interaction, **treat that anxiety as a reminder to get out of your head and focus externally on the conversation / activity / person in the moment.**
- Daily log the minutes and per cent mindful you were each time you practice.

MINDFULNESS PRACTICE LOG

Name _____

Curiosity training while...

Write date ➔							
OBSERVING (log what you observed, how long, % mindful)							
PARTICIPATING (log conversation / activity, how long, % mindful)							

Write date ➔							
OBSERVING (write what you observed and your % mindful)							
PARTICIPATING (log conversation / activity, how long, % mindful)							

Write date ➔							
OBSERVING (write what you observed and your % mindful)							
PARTICIPATING (log conversation / activity, how long, % mindful)							

Write date ➔							
OBSERVING (write what you observed and your % mindful)							
PARTICIPATING (log conversation / activity, how long, % mindful)							

Brief Cognitive Strategies

Oral Cognitive Restructuring: Completing a cognitive restructuring worksheet (CRW) is usually the best way to learn and master this skill, and to handle situations or moods that are very difficult. But there are briefer versions of doing cognitive restructuring that you may want to try as a first step once you have mastered this skill doing worksheets. When you are feeling distressed or avoiding something, try completing a CRW orally: go through the rows one-by-one through self-talk. If you are alone, it will probably be more effective to do so out loud (or in writing) rather than silently in your mind. You can skip some rows, but make sure you at least identify the feelings, hot thoughts and safety behaviors, and that you counter them with a constructive attitude and action steps to take. Then focus mindfully on doing these action steps while treating your thoughts and feelings like background noise. If, after trying this, you find that you are still feeling distressed or continue to avoid for more than an hour, then complete a CRW that very day!

The Three Cs: This is a shorter version of oral cognitive restructuring that uses three steps:

1. **Catch it:** identify your hot thought(s) when you experience a negative feeling or avoidance.
2. **Check it:** evaluate the evidence regarding how realistic, helpful and compassionate your hot thoughts are.
3. **Change it:** identify a constructive attitude: a more realistic, helpful and compassionate alternative to your hot thoughts. Identify action steps you will take based on your constructive attitude. Then focus mindfully on these steps while ignoring your thoughts and feelings.

If, after using this approach, you find that you are still feeling distressed or continue to avoid for more than an hour, then complete a Cognitive Restructuring Worksheet that very day!

Thought Responding (extremely brief oral CR): If you have a repeated pattern of distorted hot thoughts, identify a short version of a constructive attitude (CA) that you believe at your best of times. For example, if you repeatedly criticize yourself for perceived mistakes, you might use a short CA such as “I don’t have to be perfect; no one does.” Or simply use “Oh, well!” and shrug it off. If you repeatedly compare yourself negatively to others, you might use “Everyone has strengths and weaknesses.” If you repeatedly worry about things, consider using “I’ll do the best I can; no one can make everything turn out perfect.”

- Whenever you notice you are engaging in the targeted hot thoughts (eg. self-criticism, negative self-comparison, or repetitious worry), then recite your short CA. Do so out loud and with a tone of calm and confidence if you are alone, as it is more effective this way. Until thought responding has become a new habit, try carrying this short CA with you (eg. on a card or in your electronic device). You may also find it helpful at first to wear or carry some sort of symbolic reminder (eg. a special piece of jewelry, a rubber wrist band, a religious object, a pretty stone, etc.)

⇒ Do not criticize yourself for having the hot thoughts, or paradoxically you end up strengthening them. Everyone has hot thoughts. We do not have control over whether or not our brain generates a hot thought. The goal is NOT to stop having hot thoughts. No one can accomplish this goal; nor is it necessary. The goal is simply to not believe your hot thoughts and to defuse from them emotionally: to see them as passing mental noise and to not take them seriously. In fact, this thought-responding strategy can turn your hot thoughts into your friends, as they become a paradoxical reminder to affirm yourself.

- Remember, if you find you are still feeling distressed or continue to avoid for more than an hour, complete a Cognitive Restructuring Worksheet that very day!

(over)

There's an app for that: There are many apps that are abbreviated versions of a cognitive restructuring worksheet. The one I like the best is called **CBT Thought Diary** (or Thought Diary for short). It's quick, easy and always on your phone! (Unfortunately, it doesn't have a place for safety-seeking behaviors and alternative action steps/goals, but you can add that.)

Thought Defusion & Mindfulness: An alternative approach is to apply the concept of thought defusion: being aware of your thoughts and feelings without getting involved with them. Rather than respond to the content of your hot thoughts (as in cognitive restructuring), simply notice these thoughts with an attitude of detachment and indifference as though they were background noise. Then redirect your attention mindfully (with curiosity rather than judgment) to a valued activity or a person in the moment. Use this strategy repeatedly--in a gentle and calm manner, and without self-criticism--whenever you are distressed by your thoughts. Optionally, you may silently use a gentle, non-critical word (eg. "mindful" or "present") to briefly interrupt your thought and return your attention to the activity or person in the moment.

- A variant of the above that some people find easier to use is to label your negative thoughts while they are occurring in your mind in an emotionally detached manner, eg.: **"I notice I'm having an anxious [depressed / angry / embarrassed / upset] idea. It will pass."** Then redirect your attention to focus mindfully on a valued activity or person in the moment. This simple technique reminds you that a thought is just a passing idea; it is not a fact. Use this strategy whenever you are distressed by your thoughts. But do so calmly and gently, without self-criticism.
- You can also practice this technique through daily meditation in which you focus mindfully on your stream of thoughts in a detached manner. Whether your thoughts are negative, positive or neutral, simply notice them as they drift by with an attitude of detachment and indifference. Do not engage your thoughts in any way; just observe them. You may find it helpful to imagine yourself watching a video of what's going on in your mind: you just sit back and watch, but you don't jump into the video! Some people find it helpful to imagine their thoughts drifting away in floating balloons...or passing clouds...or blowing leaves...or slow-moving train cars. Meditate as long as it takes until you truly feel indifferent toward your thoughts.

Paradoxical Repetition: If you find yourself troubled by repetitive hot thoughts, a paradoxical approach can turn these ideas into empty words that have no power over you. When you are alone, take one specific hot thought that has been bothering you (eg.: I am such an idiot; I screwed up again; This is going to be awful), and repeat that one thought out loud, over and over and over, using a very silly and exaggerated tone of voice, for two or three minutes until it starts feeling amusing. Some people find it helpful to sing these thoughts out loud, making up a melody as you go or using one you know. (Try singing "I am such an idiot" to the tune of Mary Had a Little Lamb and see how it feels!) Or speak one of your hot thoughts into a smart phone app such as AutoRap, Talking Tom, Talking Pierre and Voki, and learn to laugh at these previously upsetting ideas.

Be a Good Parent / Friend to Yourself: Make it a goal to congratulate or affirm yourself on an ongoing basis for anything positive you did that was somewhat challenging, no matter how small or imperfect. Be specific. Do not let your perfectionistic tendencies lead you to disqualify the positive. If you are troubled by any mistakes or other imperfections on your part, transform self-criticism into a constructive learning experience by simply identifying what you can do differently next time. But *first* start with patting yourself on the back for the positive things you did.

- Make this process a new and ongoing habit you engage in frequently, at least once a day. This will help raise your self-esteem and self-confidence. Carrying or wearing a symbol every day (eg. a special piece of jewelry, a rubber wrist band, a religious object, a pretty stone, etc.) may help you remember to make this an ongoing, healthy life habit. You can combine this with keeping a daily Pride and Gratitude Log.

COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING WORKSHEET

Name _____

SITUATION & DATE event, circumstance or experiment (past, present or future) when you feel distressed or avoid

FEELINGS (intensity 0-100% before & after completing CRW) emotions and physical sensations

HOT THOUGHTS (belief 0-100%) your most distressing ideas, concerns, images, predictions &/or core beliefs

SAFETY-SEEKING BEHAVIORS things you do or avoid to try to cope, including how you focus your attention

COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS in your hot thoughts

CHALLENGING QUESTIONS to debate your hot thoughts

CONSTRUCTIVE ATTITUDE (belief 0-100%) a truer, compassionate & helpful alternative to your hot thoughts, predictions &/or core beliefs (including answers to your challenging questions)

Positive motivators specific ways you expect to benefit (short- & long-term) by doing the experiment or action steps

Short version

BEHAVIORAL GOALS & ACTION STEPS a more helpful alternative to your safety-seeking behaviors
[Rerate your feelings after completing this worksheet.]

COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING WORKSHEET

Name _____

SITUATION & DATE event, circumstance or experiment (past, present or future) when you feel distressed or avoid
5/11: going to a party where I know few people

FEELINGS (intensity 0-100% before & after completing CRW) emotions and physical sensations
--nervous: 90% → 60% --embarrassed: 50% → 35% --jittery: 50% → 25%
--tense: 75% → 50% --self-conscious: 100% → 50%

HOT THOUGHTS (belief 0-100%) your most distressing ideas, concerns, images, predictions &/or core beliefs
--I won't know what to say, or I might say something stupid. 75%
--I'll appear tense & nervous. 80% --People will think poorly of me,
--I've got to find a way out of this. 75% and won't enjoy talking to me. 100%

SAFETY-SEEKING BEHAVIORS things you do or avoid to try to cope, including how you focus your attention
--don't initiate conversations --stay off by sidelines --withdraw, say very little
--try to script what to say next --focus on myself to try to appear less nervous

COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS in your hot thoughts
--perfectionistic thinking --magnifying & minimizing
--fortune telling --self-defeating thinking

CHALLENGING QUESTIONS to debate your hot thoughts
--What's the objective evidence? --How likely is it that this would happen,
--What good things might I experience? and how could I handle it if it did?

CONSTRUCTIVE ATTITUDE (belief 0-100%) a truer, compassionate & helpful alternative to your hot thoughts, predictions &/or core beliefs (including answers to your challenging questions)

While mingling in other settings, I've found that the conversation is more likely to go well if I focus mindfully in the moment, and not on my feelings and how I think I'm coming across. If one conversation doesn't go so well, I can feel proud that I was being friendly and took a risk. Then I'll simply move on and talk to someone else. Some people have told me I don't appear as anxious as I think I do. In the rare event that someone is so rude as to say I appear nervous or that I said something stupid, I can simply acknowledge it non-defensively and point out that everyone has this experience at times. Some people will enjoy talking to me and I'll enjoy talking to some people, despite some initial awkwardness. But no one is liked by everyone, so I don't have to be afraid of being disliked by a stranger at a party. 65%

Positive motivators specific ways you expect to benefit (short- & long-term) by doing the experiment or action steps

This is good practice at meeting people and making small talk. I'll feel proud of myself for trying and for being friendly, no matter how it goes. I'll probably enjoy some of the conversations. I might meet someone I like. In the long run, this will help me make friends and get a date. 80%

Short version *Focus on enjoying the conversation.*

BEHAVIORAL GOALS & ACTION STEPS a more helpful alternative to your safety-seeking behaviors

[Rerate your feelings after completing this worksheet.]

--attend party & stay 2+ hours --focus mindfully on the conversation
--greet 5+ new people --try to keep the conversations going
--start 2 conversations for at least 15 minutes each

COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS

ALL-OR-NOTHING / BLACK-OR WHITE / PERFECTIONISTIC THINKING: You see things in black and white categories. There are no gray areas in between. If something is less than perfect, you see it as terrible or as a failure.

OVERGENERALIZING: You see a single negative event as a never-ending pattern, or representing a character defect.

MENTAL FILTERING: When something is a mixture of negative and positive aspects, you dwell overwhelmingly on the negative details. Your view of the whole thing becomes negative as a result.

DISQUALIFYING THE POSITIVE: You reject or belittle positive experience by insisting that it doesn't count for some reason.

MIND READING: You jump to the conclusion that someone is thinking or feeling negatively toward you. You're probably projecting your negative thoughts about yourself onto someone else.

FORTUNE TELLING: You jump to the conclusion that things will turn out badly, and you feel convinced that your prediction is an already established fact.

MAGNIFYING & MINIMIZING: You exaggerate the importance of some things (eg. your deficiencies or someone else's achievements), and you shrink other things down until they appear unimportant (eg. your desirable qualities or someone else's imperfections).

CATASTROPHIZING: You attribute extreme and horrible consequences to the outcomes of events.

EMOTIONAL REASONING: You assume that your negative emotions necessarily reflect the way things really are in the external world. For example, you feel embarrassed or ashamed, so you assume you behaved poorly.

SHOULD / MUSTS: You have a strong and inflexible sense of the way that things should / must / have to / ought to be.

LABELING: Instead of describing a situation or behavior you don't like, you attach an all-encompassing and negative label to a whole person. For example: "I'm a loser;" or "He's selfish."

PERSONALIZING: You see negative events as indicative of something wrong with you, or as somehow your responsibility.

SELF-DEFEATING THINKING: Any thought that causes you needless pain or turmoil, or which makes it harder for you to get what you want. Such thoughts often lead to vicious cycles and self-fulfilling prophecies.

CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

- → What's the *objective, concrete* evidence supporting or refuting my hot thoughts?
- → How likely is it that this bad thing would come to pass? How would I cope with it or overcome it if were to happen?
- → What's the WORST that could happen? What's the BEST that could happen? What's MOST LIKELY to happen?
- What would an impartial, independent observer think of this situation?
- What would I say to a friend who is thinking and feeling the way I am? What would a good friend say to me?
- What aspects of this situation are simply not in my control, no matter how much I worry about it? What are the advantages of *accepting* that these things are not in my control?
- Instead of simply worrying, what action steps can I take now to prevent or cope with problem that concerns me?
- What's the worst that could happen? How awful would that be compared to the worst thing I ever experienced?
- What are the advantages vs. disadvantages for me to believe or worry about this?
- What alternative explanation or possibility is there? What's the evidence for that alternative?
- How important is my concern? To what extent does my future really reside on this?
- How much will this matter to me one week / one month / six months / one year from now? Why will this change over time?
- If I were in his / her shoes, what are the possible reasons why I would have acted that way?
- Does _____'s opinion reflect that of everyone else? Could other people feel differently?
- Is an old button of mine is being pushed in this situation? How is that affecting my response to the present situation?
- What would be a more helpful way for me to think about this?

COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING

How to Do It Effectively

- 1. Make sure that you have all your feelings down, and rate their intensity, 0-100%.** Feelings are either emotions or physical sensations. Self-talk, even if it includes the word "feel," belongs under Hot Thoughts.
- 2. Make sure all your feelings are explained by your hot thoughts.** Try to limit your list to the 1-4 *hottest thoughts*: those that make you feel most upset or distressed. Include any disturbing predictions you may have. Be as specific and concrete as possible as to how you think things will turn out for you. Rate your belief in these hot thoughts, 0-100%
- 3. Difficulty identifying your hot thoughts?** Try a little IMAGERY: close your eyes and imagine yourself in the situation you are writing about. Let yourself experience the feelings you have in this situation for a few minutes. Then patiently observe the words, scenes &/or predictions going through your mind without responding to them. These are your hot thoughts, so write them down. Or try this FORMULA: "I was feeling this way because I was concerned that...." Complete the sentence and write down your answer under Hot Thoughts.
- 4. Translate rhetorical questions into statements.** If one of your thoughts is in the form of a rhetorical question (eg. "What if I screw up?"), write it down instead as a statement (eg. "It would be humiliating if I screwed up!").
- 5. Write down primary as well as secondary thoughts.** Sometimes the thoughts we're most aware of are "secondary:" ie. what we are thinking about the fact that we are already feeling badly or avoiding something. Make sure you also include the *primary* thoughts: ie. *the concerns that caused you to feel badly or avoid something in the first place.*
- 6. Identify your safety-seeking behaviors:** what you do or avoid to try to cope with this situation, including how you focus your attention (eg. self-monitoring your symptoms, critiquing your "performance," scripting what to say next.)
- 7. Find the cognitive distortions** that you can see in each of your hot thoughts. Choose from the list.
- 8. Choose a few challenging questions** to help you debate your hot thoughts. Pick a few questions from the list that you believe best challenge your thoughts, and write them down in this section. Definitely consider the first three (with arrows), but consider using one or two of the others, as well. Don't write down the *answers* to challenging questions here. Instead, incorporate the answers to the challenging questions in your Constructive Attitude.
- 9. Make sure all your hot thoughts are countered by your Constructive Attitude (CA).** If there is a negative aspect to the situation that is not distorted, then acknowledge this in your CA and state how you can effectively cope with or overcome that problem.
- 10. Optional structure for CA:** Until you develop your own style, you may want to try this optional structure when writing your CA: "IT'S TRUE THAT [followed by brief summary of any negative evidence supporting elements of your hot thoughts]. HOWEVER [followed by a more detailed summary of evidence refuting your hot thoughts]. THEREFORE [followed by a conclusion that is truer, compassionate and helpful]."
- 11. Try to make your CA compassionate and positively worded.** Avoid the tendency to use double negatives or to be on the defensive or self-critical in your CA. Try to be compassionate to yourself and others in your CA (supportive, caring and understanding), like a loving parent or friend would be.
- 12. Make sure your CA is believable to you.** This is *not* the "power of positive thinking." A positive CA that you don't particularly believe is not likely to help. But be willing to stretch yourself a little. Something that you think is at least 60% believable (ie. you think it's *probably* true, but aren't sure) is a good start.
- 13. Include a few positive motivators** in your CA. Positive motivators are specific ways you hope to benefit by doing the experiment or the action steps that you identify in the next section. Include both immediate and longer-range benefits.
- 14. Add a short version of your CA.** This should be no more than a single phrase or a very short sentence that encapsulates the heart of your longer version. It is intended as an easily memorized reminder to yourself that you can use in the midst of an experiment or a difficult moment.
- 15. Under Behavioral Goals & Action Steps, write down specific and helpful alternatives to your safety-seeking behaviors,** as well as any additional specific steps you may wish to take to better handle the situation.
- 16. Rerate the intensity of your feelings** upon completion of this worksheet (in the Feelings row). Effective cognitive restructuring will usually decrease the intensity of your negative feelings significantly. If not, check to see that you have all your hot thoughts recorded, and that you've countered them in a way you find believable and helpful.

EXPERIMENT WORKSHEET

Name _____

<i>Before experiment</i>		<i>After experiment</i>		
SITUATION & DATE:	PREDICTIONS: What exactly do you fear will happen (your verbal hot thoughts and disturbing images)? What are the underlying core beliefs? ⇒ Rate belief: 0-100%	EXPERIMENT: What will you do to test your predictions? Specify your behavioral goals. Include: external mindful focus & drop safety-seeking behaviors.	EVIDENCE: What actually happened? Did your feared predictions come true? If so, how bad was it for you, and how did you cope with it?	WHAT I LEARNED: What do these experiments tell you about yourself, your hot thoughts & core beliefs? How can you build on this? ⇒ Rate belief: 0-100%

EXPERIMENT WORKSHEET

Name _____

Before experiment		After experiment		
SITUATION & DATE:	PREDICTIONS: What exactly do you fear will happen (your verbal hot thoughts and disturbing images)? What are the underlying core beliefs? ⇒ Rate belief: 0-100%	EXPERIMENT: What will you do to test your predictions? Specify your behavioral goals. Include: external mindful focus & drop safety-seeking behaviors.	EVIDENCE: What actually happened? Did your feared predictions come true? If so, how bad was it for you, and how did you cope with it?	WHAT I LEARNED: What do these experiments tell you about yourself, your hot thoughts & core beliefs? How can you build on this? ⇒ Rate belief: 0-100%
5/11: going to a party where I know few people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --I won't know what to say, or I might say something stupid. --I'll appear tense & nervous. --People will think poorly of me, and won't enjoy talking to me. --I have an image of people snickering, giving me disapproving looks, and getting out of the conversation quickly. --85% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --attend party & stay 2+ hours --greet 5+ new people --start 2 conversations --focus mindfully on the conversation --try to keep the conversations going for at least 15 minutes --speak more expansively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --One conversation seemed to be enjoyable to both of us. We both talked actively for about 20 minutes. --No one appeared to react negatively to me, not even in the first awkward conversation. --Two people came up to me and started conversations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --If I approach people, focus mindfully and speak longer, I'm pretty good at making social conversation, and some people enjoy talking to me. A little awkwardness with a new person is no big deal. --70%
5/9-12: social conversation with coworkers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --I won't know what to say, or I might say something stupid. --I'll appear tense & nervous. --People will think I'm bothering them. --People will think poorly of me, and won't enjoy talking to me. --I have an image of people snickering, giving me disapproving looks, and getting out of the conversation quickly. --65% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --initiate social conversation with at least 1 coworker daily --focus mindfully on the conversation --try to keep each conversation going for 2-3 minutes --speak more expansively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Most people reacted in a friendly way. They asked me follow-up questions and seemed interested in chatting. --Steve was brief with me and kept looking at his work. I took that to mean he was busy & wanted to be left alone, so I excused myself. But he was friendly the next day. --Kim initiated a conversation with me the day after I talked with her. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Most of the time coworkers enjoy talking to me. If someone turns out to not want to talk, I can excuse myself and no harm has been done. I'm good enough at making conversation so long as I focus mindfully and speak more expansively. --75%

Name _____

VIDEO EVIDENCE WORKSHEET

Experiment & date _____

BEFORE viewing the video: First spend a couple minutes with your eyes closed imaging how you came across during your experiment. Then complete the following questions:

⇒ (Place an X on this scale.) Overall, how well do you think you came across during the experiment?

0	25	50	75	100
terrible	bad	so-so	good	great

⇒ Using the scale above, give a numeric rating for how well you think you did each of the following:

Eye contact:	_____	Face twitching:	_____
Stuttering:	_____	Voice quivering:	_____
Long pauses:	_____	Fluid speech:	_____
Fidgeting:	_____	Acted friendly:	_____
Fillers (um, ah, so, etc.):	_____	Interesting / engaging:	_____
Trembling / shaking:	_____	Appeared awkward:	_____
Sweating:	_____	Appeared embarrassed:	_____
Blushing:	_____	Hand gestures:	_____
Balanced conversation:	_____	Got your points across:	_____

❖ Now watch the video mindfully, with an objective, non-biased mindset, as though you were viewing a video of a stranger, not yourself. Watch the video with an attitude of curiosity, and ignore any distressing thoughts and feelings you may have. If you are distressed while viewing your video, then take a break and watch it a second time more mindfully: with a sense of curiosity and emotional detachment, as though it were a stranger in the video. If you are still distressed after seeing it a second time, then take a longer break and watch it a third time. The goal is to be able to observe it objectively, without emotional distress. It does not mean that you will like everything you see, just that you accept it all, and do not get upset by any of it.

AFTER viewing the video:

⇒ (Place an X on this scale.) Overall, how well do you think you came across during the experiment?

0	25	50	75	100
terrible	bad	so-so	good	great

⇒ Using the scale above, give a numeric rating for how well you think you did each of the following:

Eye contact:	_____	Face twitching:	_____
Stuttering:	_____	Voice quivering:	_____
Long pauses:	_____	Fluid speech:	_____
Fidgeting:	_____	Acted friendly:	_____
Fillers (um, ah, so, etc.):	_____	Interesting / engaging:	_____
Trembling / shaking:	_____	Appeared awkward:	_____
Sweating:	_____	Appeared embarrassed:	_____
Blushing:	_____	Hand gestures:	_____
Balanced conversation:	_____	Got your points across:	_____

HEAD-HELD-HIGH ASSERTION

Fear-Come-True

[Write the things you fear the most in social or performance situations that make you anxious. Be specific as to what you most fear will happen, and what you most fear people will say or do in reaction to you. Include anything you most fear, no matter how unlikely it is to occur.]

Head-Held-High

[Write the specific ways you would like to handle your fears-come-true, including both what you would SAY and DO. Write out how you would like to assert yourself to the persons who criticize or otherwise react negatively toward you. Use a tone of confidence and conviction. Don't be defensive, overly apologetic or aggressive. Disarm the critics by starting your assertion with acknowledging any truth there may be in the criticism or other negative reaction, but minus any exaggeration or insult. Then stand up for yourself. Write it out even if you don't think you would have the nerve to say it, as long as you would want to.]

HEAD-HELD-HIGH ASSERTION

Fear-Come-True

[Write the things you fear the most in social or performance situations that make you anxious. Be specific as to what you most fear will happen, and what you most fear people will say or do in reaction to you. Include anything you most fear, no matter how unlikely it is to occur.]

1 -I start blushing/sweating when mingling with new people at a social event, and someone tells me I look weird and weak.

2 -I say something stupid or incorrect during a conversation, and the other person gives me a weird look. I assume he/she thinks poorly of me and has lost respect for me.

3 -I unintentionally offend someone in a conversation, and s/he tells me how hurt and angry s/he is at me.

4 -Someone tells me that s/he thinks I'm boring, unappealing or unattractive, and so doesn't want to have anything to do with me.

5 -I appear nervous when speaking at a meeting and people tell me that must mean I don't know what I'm talking about and am not good at my job.

6 -I go blank when speaking at a meeting because I am so anxious. I can't continue speaking, and people start looking at me strangely. I presume they must be thinking poorly of me, and that they no longer respect me.

Head-Held-High

[Write the specific ways you would like to handle your fears-come-true, including both what you would SAY and DO. Write out how you would like to assert yourself to the persons who criticize or otherwise react negatively toward you. Use a tone of confidence and conviction. Don't be defensive, overly apologetic or aggressive. Disarm the critics by starting your assertion with acknowledging any truth there may be in the criticism or other negative reaction, but minus any exaggeration or insult. Then stand up for yourself. Write it out even if you don't think you would have the nerve to say it, as long as you would want to.]

1 -It's true that I do blush and sweat easily when I'm uncomfortable. We all have quirks, and that happens to be mine. [Then continue the conversation.]

2 -It's true, that was a silly thing for me to say. I'm sorry about that. I'm just like everyone else in that I sometimes say silly things. Oh, well. Let's move on. [Then continue the conversation.]

3 -I apologize. I certainly didn't mean to offend you. I sometime make mistakes. [Then continue the conversation.]

4 -Oh, well. It's unfortunate that you don't find me to your liking. Fortunately, we all have different tastes and other people like me as I am. [Then move on and start a conversation with someone else.]

5 -It's true that I get nervous speaking in front of groups. Lot's of people do. But I happen to be very good at my job and have important things to say. [Then continue speaking at the meeting.]

6 -Excuse me. I'm afraid I just lost track of what I was saying. Oh, well. I'm going to go back to my previous point and continue from there. I'd appreciate your patience and attention. [Then continue speaking at the meeting.]

Name _____

Date _____

INVENTORY OF SELF-DEFEATING CORE BELIEFS

Please read all of the following core beliefs and put a check by the ones you believe much of the time, especially when you are anxious / depressed / insecure. **Make changes, if necessary, in the wording of these beliefs in order to improve the fit.** When you are done, go back and place additional checks by the 4 or 5 beliefs that seem to be most influential in your life.

- 1. I can't find happiness unless I'm very attractive / intelligent / rich / successful / creative.
- 2. To be rejected is horrible because it means I'm worthless / undesirable / not good enough.
- 3. People will think less of me if I make a mistake or don't handle something very well.
- 4. My life is empty / meaningless if I'm not loved.
- 5. Taking even a small risk is foolish because the loss could be devastating.
- 6. People like / respect me for what I do, not what I am.
- 7. I cannot be happy unless most people I know admire / approve of me.
- 8. If I ask for help it is a sign of weakness.
- 9. I'm not a good / worthwhile / likable person if I don't completely meet my responsibilities & expectations.
- 10. If I fail at my work then I am a failure as a person.
- 11. If I cannot do something well there is little point in doing it at all.
- 12. People who don't follow all the rules are bad / selfish.
- 13. If someone criticizes or disagrees with me it indicates that s/he does not like me.
- 14. If I fail partly it is almost as bad as being a complete failure.
- 15. If other people knew what I was really like they will think less of me and probably reject me.
- 16. I have never learned how to meet people / make friends / make small talk / relate to people well.
- 17. I must always be in control or there will likely be terrible consequences.
- 18. If I let someone get too close that person will take away my control / freedom.
- 19. My value as a person depends greatly on what others think of me.
- 20. It is weak / immature to not be in control of one's emotions.
- 21. It's terrible to hurt someone's feelings, and I should never do that.
- 22. People who have good ideas are better than those who do not.
- 23. There are only winners or losers in life.
- 24. I should never express anger or I will hurt someone or lose control.
- 25. To be a good / moral / worthwhile person, I must help everyone I know who needs it.
- 26. I don't measure up to others.
- 27. If someone does something displeasing to me it means that s/he doesn't like / care about me.
- 28. If I don't have other people to depend on I cannot cope / be happy.
- 29. It is wrong to be proud / boastful / rude / angry.
- 30. I can't stand unpleasant feelings, and I should avoid situations that make me feel that way.
- 31. It is dangerous to trust or get close to other people because they might hurt me badly.
- 32. If others dislike or are displeased with me I cannot be happy.
- 33. It is best to give up my own interests if necessary in order to please other people.
- 34. My happiness depends on other people and circumstances; I have little control over how happy I am.
- 35. I need the approval of other people in order to be happy.
- 36. If I avoid problems the problems tend to go away.
- 37. I am socially inept.
- 38. I can't make good decisions on my own
- 39. I cannot be happy if I am alone / single.
- 40. I can't cope with difficulties in life without someone's help.
- 41. If I am not special / among the best then I am not good enough.
- 42. Rules are often arbitrary, unfair and stifling, and I shouldn't have to follow them.
- 43. If I don't have order / systems / control then everything will fall apart.
- 44. I have been unfairly treated and I am entitled to get my fair share.
- 45. I am a very special person compared to most other people.
- 46. It is wrong to be focused on pursuing pleasure / sexual gratification / selfish interests.
- 47. In order to be happy others have to pay attention to me.
- 48. Don't feel too good about something that happens or it will just turn out bad and I'll get disappointed.
- 49. Other people will try to use / manipulate / hurt me if I don't watch out.
- 50. I'm different from others and don't really fit in or belong.

PEELING THE ONION

Name _____ Date _____

↓ = *If that hot thought were true...*

...what would it mean about you / your life / other people / the world?

[Only include your beliefs and behaviors on this worksheet, not your feelings.]



PEELING THE ONION

Name _____

Date _____

↓ = *If that hot thought were true...*

...what would it mean about you / your life / other people / the world?

[Only include your beliefs and behaviors on this worksheet, not your feelings.]

I might say something stupid, or I won't know what to say.



I'll make a bad impression. They'll think I'm strange or socially inept.



They won't like me or respect me, and won't want to relate to me.



I won't have friends or a romantic relationship.

They'll see that I'm nervous.



They'll think I'm strange or weak.



They won't like or respect me, and won't want to relate to me.



I won't have friends or a romantic relationship.

They'll be angry or disappointed in me if I disagree and state my real opinions or concerns.



They'll no longer like or respect me, and won't want to relate to me.



I won't have friends or a romantic relationship.



HOW TO WRITE HEALTHY NEW CORE BELIEFS

Re-read your unhealthy old core beliefs, then read each of the suggested methods of writing healthier, alternative beliefs below. Pick at least 2 of these methods to try out.

No matter which methods you use, check your work to see that you have met these three criteria for effective new core beliefs:

- make sure your new beliefs counter *all* your old (unhealthy) beliefs
- make sure your new beliefs are *believable* to you (ie. you consider them to be *probably true*, or at least that you believe them at your best of times)
- try to word the new beliefs in the positive, and avoid double negatives

1. **Cognitive Restructuring**: Write down your most important unhealthy, old core beliefs in the Hot Thoughts section of a Cognitive Restructuring Worksheet. For Situation, simply write “unhealthy old core beliefs.” Then complete the remaining rows of the worksheet, carefully following the directions on the purple sheet. The Constructive Attitude is a rough draft of your healthy, new core beliefs.
2. **Your Best of Times**: Think of the time(s) in your adult life when you have felt *most confident and positive about yourself and your life* (not just pleased about something that happened). What were your core beliefs operating at those times? I'm not talking about the automatic thoughts that were *explicitly* on your mind; I'm referring to the underlying, *implicit* beliefs you had then (about yourself, other people, the world, etc.)
3. **Imagining a Confident Future**: Think of the most emotionally challenging situations for you to experience, or the feared outcomes which you try your hardest to avoid experiencing (eg. rejection, judgment, embarrassment, failure). Next, think through how you would ideally like to be able to handle these challenging situations and the feared outcomes if you felt better about yourself. Then close your eyes and spend a few minutes imagining yourself handling one or more of these challenging situations and fears come true with a sense of self-confidence. Repeat this imagery until it feels stronger and more emotionally resonant for you. Keeping your eyes closed, think about what you would have to believe about yourself and others in order for you to feel and act in this self-confident way you imagined. Write down these healthy new core beliefs.
4. **People You Admire**: Think of the people you have most admired or looked up to in your life. It doesn't matter whether or not they are alive, or whether you know them personally or are famous people you have never known. Include also people whom you look up to for certain qualities but not for other qualities. Then write down what you imagine would be the core beliefs these persons must have in order to create the qualities you so admire in them.
5. **You as Mentor**: Imagine that you are the mentor to a teenager or young adult. Imagine that this young person confides in you the personal problems, fears and self-doubts that s/he has been experiencing in life. Imagine also that this young person's problems are similar to your own. What would you like to teach this young person to believe so that s/he may overcome these problems, fears and self-doubts?

Unhealthy Old Core Beliefs

- I'm boring, no fun to be around, and socially awkward.
- I don't measure up to others and I don't like myself the way I am – if I was more like other people I would feel better about myself.
- I cannot be happy unless most people I know like and respect me.
- It's terrible to hurt other people's feelings and I should never do that.
- I must always be in control of every situation to make sure no one judges me or thinks poorly of me.

Healthy New Core Beliefs

- There will always be some people better than me and some people worse than me at everything – it is all relative and all subjective.
- Not everyone will like me, but they're not worth crying over. The people worth investing my time and energy in are the ones who appreciate me for who I am.
- No matter what other people (or myself, for that matter) think of me or how they judge me, I have intrinsic value as a human being.
- Nobody is perfect and I am still a good and likeable person even if I sometimes hurt or offend others.
- I cannot control other people's thoughts or behavior toward me. It is actually liberating to realize the only thing I can control is my perspective.

Unhealthy Old Core Beliefs & Healthy New Core Beliefs

(Old) If someone does something that displeases me, that means he/she doesn't like me because I am flawed.

(New) Many people like me, flaws and all, just as I like many people, flaws and all.

(Old) People that don't follow the rules are bad.

(New) No one follows all rules all the time. That's part of being human. I can befriend people that I like nonetheless.

(Old) I have never learned how to meet people or connect well with people.

(New) When I am mindfully focused on the conversation, I usually connect well with people.

Short versions of new core beliefs:

I am wonderfully flawed, and I am capable of connecting with equally flawed people when I'm mindfully focused.

Affirming Your Healthy New Core Beliefs

Daily Reciting of New CBs: Write your healthy new CBs (long and short versions) on a card or in your phone, and carry that with you daily. Then read your new CBs as part of your daily routine (eg. upon waking, commuting to/from work, starting your work day, having a meal, going to bed). Consider setting up an electronic alert that goes off daily to help make this a new habit. *Recite your healthy new CBs no less than once a day.*

- When you are alone, recite your healthy new CBs (long and short versions) out loud and with feeling. Use a tone of conviction and confidence, like you really mean it! This is usually more effective than reading your new CBs silently, or reciting them flatly, without emotion. It may be helpful at first to think of yourself as an actor who must say these lines convincingly. Practice this over and over until it stops feeling silly and starts feeling empowering or invigorating. (If, after a few days, this still makes you cringe, then revise your new CBs to make them more believable to you.) Remember, repetition and emotion create stronger neural pathways in your brain. You are attempting to replace the strong neural pathways created by hundreds or thousands of emotion-filled repetitions of your unhealthy old CBs over many years. So affirm your new CBs often and with oomph!
- Optionally make an audio recording on your smart phone of you reciting your New CBs (long and short versions) with a tone of confidence and conviction. Then listen to it at least once daily. Consider setting up an electronic alert that goes off daily to help make this a new habit.
- Memorize and use short versions of your new CBs, ideally several times throughout the day, as a personal mantra. These can be in the form of affirmations, positively-worded instructions, or prayers. Important: these must be things you believe at least 60%, or they will have little value and may just make you cringe!
- You'll need to make all this an *evolving process* or it will probably become stale. So as you use the above techniques, pay attention to and write down any changes or additions to your new CBs that come to mind (both long and short versions) and start using these.

Flash Cards: Start by writing a list of your major triggers that typically activate your unhealthy old CBs, ie. when you are feeling upset, anxious, or avoidant. Then pick the 3 or 4 triggers that cause you the most problems. Label a separate sheet of paper (or sections of an electronic file) with a short title for each trigger, eg: "Being Criticized;" "Comparing Myself to Others;" "Feeling Anxious When Conversing With Others."

- For each trigger separately, answer the following questions:
 1. What old CB is being activated when I experience this trigger?

(over)

2. How does this old CB make you react?
 3. How is this reaction unhelpful? Does it become a self-fulfilling prophecy or a vicious cycle?
 4. What is the healthier, alternative CB to use at this time?
 5. What is a healthier, more helpful way to react?
- Keep your answers to these questions as brief as possible, eg. a sentence or two each, or even combining a couple answers into a single sentence. After doing so, rewrite the answers as a short statement with a title on a separate file card, or as a note in your smart phone. Try to combine any buttons that have very similar answers onto a single flash card. Make sure each of these statements reads well on its own, and does not require you to refer to the above questions to make sense of it. For example:

POTENTIAL OR ACTUAL REJECTION: This situation triggers my unhealthy old core belief that I need others' approval to be OK. That belief makes me feel anxious or depressed, and leads me to be withdrawn and self-conscious around new people. This behavior makes it very hard for others to connect with me, which only leads me to feel badly about myself and be even more anxious, depressed and withdrawn. The only approval I actually need is my own. If someone rejects me, it just means that we aren't a good fit for each other. It doesn't mean that either of us is deficient! I'll take small risks in trying to connect with new people, and move on to someone else if someone turns out to be a bad fit.

- If you prefer, write your flash cards with only the positive points (ie. the title of the button, and the answer to questions #4 and #5, above.)
- Carry these flash cards with you at all times. (This is one reason why you may find it helpful to make them notes on your phone.) Read them all periodically: ideally once daily. Consider setting up an electronic alert that goes off daily to help make this a new habit. Most importantly, read the relevant flash card whenever an old CB is activated, ie. whenever you are upset, anxious or are avoiding something. Ideally, read the card out loud and with a tone of confidence and conviction.
- Optionally make audio recordings on your smart phone of you reciting your flash cards with a tone of confidence and conviction. Then listen to these. Consider setting up an electronic alert that goes off daily to help make this a new habit.
- Modify the cards as you wish as time goes on. Write out new cards as needed. Combine cards whenever you can. (Having just a few cards is more usable than having many.)
- When an unexpected trigger occurs for which you have no card, try to go through the five questions above. If possible, do so out loud or in writing. If this does not help sufficiently (ie. you continue to feel distressed or continue to avoid) then complete a cognitive restructuring worksheet.

Experiments to Test and Defy Unhealthy Core Beliefs

Conducting homework experiments can be a powerful strategy to generate evidence that will undermine your belief in your unhealthy old CBs, and strengthen your belief in your healthy new CBs. Here are several strategies:

Straightforward Experiments: When completing an Experiment Worksheet (EW) in preparation for a straightforward homework experiment to work on achieving a therapy goal (eg. making friends, dating, being assertive, public speaking), identify the unhealthy old core belief that is generating your hot thoughts and feared predictions. Write that CB in 2nd (Predictions) column of your worksheet, along with your hot thoughts and feared predictions about that situation. Write CB- just before the unhealthy old core belief. Then, after the experiment, record the evidence you have gathered and what you have learned regarding your core belief in the last two columns of the EW. (See sample EW.)

If you choose to also complete a Cognitive Restructuring Worksheet (CRW) before your experiment, then identify your unhealthy underlying core belief, along with your hot thoughts and predictions, in the 3rd row (Hot Thoughts), and write CB- just before that belief. Then, when writing your Constructive Attitude a few rows further down, include a healthy new core belief to counter the unhealthy old one triggered by this experiment, and write CB- just before that healthy belief. (See sample CRW.)

Paradoxical Experiments: Another approach is to first identify the feared outcomes that your unhealthy old CBs tell you to dread and avoid at all costs, eg.: judgment, criticism, rejection, embarrassment, mistakes, social blunders, calling attention to yourself, or appearing anxious. Then choose a series of experiments in which you paradoxically make it your goal to deliberately seek out the feared outcomes. As in straightforward experiments (above), make sure you write the unhealthy CBs you are testing in an EW (and optionally a CRW) before conducting the experiment. Then, after the experiment, record the evidence you gathered and what you have learned related to your core belief in the remaining columns of the EW. (See sample EW and CRW.)

Rebel Experiments: Write down several of the specific personal rules dictated by your unhealthy old CBs: the ways you *should* behave, and the ways you *should avoid* behaving. Then write down a series of experiments you could do in which you make it your goal to deliberately break one of more of these personal rules repeatedly. This is akin to using nonviolent civil disobedience as a strategy to defy an unjust authority, except that the unjust authority in this case is your unhealthy old CBs.

Before conducting these experiments, complete an EW (and optionally a CRW) in which you identify the unhealthy old CB you are defying, and write CB- just before it. It is ideal to repeat these experiments, as your self-confidence will build over time. Finally, complete the remainder of the EW after your experiment in which you record the evidence you gathered and what you have learned related to your core belief. (See sample EW and CRW.)

Act As If: Plan out in advance a series of repeated experiments in which your goal is to act as if you fully believe your healthy new CBs in a situation that is likely to trigger your unhealthy old CBs. Identify as behavioral goals for your experiments the specific things you would do if you fully believed your healthy new beliefs. Record all this in an EW (and optionally a CRW) you complete before the experiments. Ideally, repeat similar experiments several times until it feels more comfortable and natural, and less like acting. After your experiments, complete the remainder of the EW in which you identify the evidence you gathered and what you have learned related to your CBs. (See sample EW and CRW.)

You can also conduct unplanned, reactive act-as-if experiments when you find yourself confronted by a situation which activates your unhealthy old CBs (ie. when you feel anxious, upset, or tempted to avoid something you otherwise want to do). First, recite your relevant healthy CBs, long or short versions. Then ask yourself: if I truly believed my new core beliefs right now, what would I do? Then act as if you truly believed your new CBs by doing these things, and focusing mindfully while doing so. Complete an EW afterwards in which you record the evidence you gathered and what you have learned about your CBs. (See sample EW.)

Consider conducting daylong experiments, eg.: act as if you have a Teflon coating preventing rejection or embarrassment from sticking; act as if your flaws and deficiencies make you interesting and desirable; act as if you enjoy learning from mistakes and disappointments. Then complete an EW afterwards, and identify the evidence you gathered and what you have learned related to your CBs. (See sample EW.)

For all versions of acting as if, make sure you are basing your experiments on something that you do, in fact, at least *partly* believe and see as personally *beneficial* to believe, or that you actually *do* believe during more confident times in your life. Then push yourself to act as if you *fully* believe it. Although it may feel uncomfortable and phony at first, the results are likely to be positive and self-reinforcing. Conduct such experiments repeatedly until it feels more comfortable and natural, and less like acting.

Imagery of your confident self: After preparing for experiments in any of the above ways, try doing imagery of you conducting these experiments with self-confidence. Start by reading your healthy new CBs, and then create vivid imagery of you doing the experiments acting as if you fully adopt this more constructive mindset. Repeat the imagery multiple times until you feel less anxious and more self-confident doing the experiments. Try doing imagery of different versions of your experiments: with strangers reacting to you in different ways, some of them negative. Practice responding to any fears come true in your imagery with confidence. (See #7 & 8 in the yellow instruction sheet: Cognitive-Behavioral Experiments for Overcoming Social Anxiety.) Then do the experiments in real life!

Other ways to record your evidence: It is helpful to keep all your evidence refuting your unhealthy old CBs and supporting your healthy new CBs in one place so you can periodically review it. Doing so will probably help improve your mood, and increase your self-confidence and self-esteem. Consider using any of the following to consolidate in one place all the evidence your CB experiments generate: a daily CB Evidence Log, a Core Belief Continuum and/or a daily Pride and Gratitude Log. (See instructions sheets: Gathering Evidence; Pride and Gratitude Log.)

CORE BELIEF ACTION PLAN

Name _____

UNHEALTHY OLD CORE BELIEFS (briefly stated)

HEALTHY NEW CORE BELIEFS (briefly stated)

RULES (dos & don'ts) DICTATED BY YOUR OLD CBs

PERSONAL GOALS you want to make good progress on before ending therapy

EXPERIMENTS you want to do before ending therapy to REBEL against your old CBs or ACT AS IF you fully belief your new CBs (straightforward and paradoxical)

CORE BELIEF ACTION PLAN

Name _____

UNHEALTHY OLD CORE BELIEFS (briefly stated)

I'm fundamentally deficient.

If someone sees any of my deficiencies, s/he will not respect, like or love me.

HEALTHY NEW CORE BELIEFS (briefly stated)

I have strengths and weaknesses, just like everyone else.

People respect, like or love me for who I am and don't expect perfection, just like I value others despite their imperfections.

RULES (dos & don'ts) DICTATED BY YOUR OLD CBs

- Don't go to social activities unless a few good friends will be there.
- Don't initiate conversations with strangers, especially those I'm attracted to.
- Don't join group conversations, or stay quiet when I am in groups.
- Do script to make sure I have things to say.
- Do avert eye contact, speak softly and speak briefly.
- Do monitor my anxiety symptoms to try to hide them.
- Do ask lots of questions to keep the focus on the other person.
- Don't talk about myself, tell stories or assert myself.
- Do end conversations early so I don't embarrass myself.
- Don't speak up at meetings, or keep it very brief if I have to speak.
- Do use fast-acting drugs (alcohol, benzos, beta blockers) to hide my symptoms.

PERSONAL GOALS you want to make good progress on before ending therapy

- Meet new people and invite them out socially.
- Make friends.
- Date people I'm attracted to.
- Give reports and presentations in meetings.

EXPERIMENTS you want to do before ending therapy to REBEL against your old CBs or ACT AS IF you fully believe your new CBs (straightforward and paradoxical)

- Attend a group social activity each week, and initiate conversations with strangers (especially those I'm attracted to), and join group conversations with strangers.
- Invite and go out with people as friends.
- Invite out people I'm attracted to and go out on dates.
- In all above conversations: no drugs/alcohol; focus mindfully on the conversation; reveal more about myself; speak expansively; have balanced conversations; tell stories; make more eye contact; speak louder; extend the conversations longer.
- (Paradoxical) During some conversation, show anxiety symptoms or ask/say something stupid, then use brief HHH assertion, then continue the conversation.
- Speak up more often and longer at staff meetings (without taking meds).
- Give a presentation or speech at work or Toastmasters (without meds).

Pride and Gratitude Log

This is a strategy to retrain your mind to counteract your old habit of mental-filtering onto the negative elements of what you experience, and to ignore, disqualify or not even notice the positive elements. The results of using this strategy regularly for at least a month are typically improved mood and self-confidence, and lessened social anxiety.

To achieve these results, however, it is necessary to use this strategy daily, and not just occasionally. Fortunately, it generally takes less than five minutes, and it usually feels good.

Here are the directions and some suggestions:

- Make it a daily practice to think back over the past 24 hours and write down anything positive that you experienced in an ongoing log (paper or electronic). Be specific. Do not disqualify the positive, no matter how small, imperfect or repeated the positive experience is. Do not write any qualifiers or anything negative here. (If you are feeling distressed about something, then separately complete a Cognitive Restructuring Worksheet on that upset.) It doesn't matter whether or not you actually *feel* pride or gratitude at this point. If it is at least partly positive, then write it down! With further practice in regularly using this log, you will likely begin to actually feel proud and grateful.
 - Reenter positive things that occur on more than one day, but make it a goal to write at least one new thing each day. If you stop including positive things because you have included them in previous days' logs, you are implicitly giving yourself the distorted message that they do not count and you may take them for granted. But do try to include at least one new item each day, even if that means choosing to do something just so you can log it!
- ⇒ For each item you write for which you were at least partially responsible, also write down the personal strengths or qualities of yours of which this is evidence. This helps you see that one small positive thing you have done is reflective of a strength / quality of yours that is actually very important and enduring. For example: you may have had a good conversation with a friend, which might be evidence that you can be an engaging conversationalist, a good friend and a likable person.
- It is important to enter items in this pride and gratitude log *every day* in order to retrain your mind to look for and value these previously neglected positive things about your life. Some people find it helpful to schedule a regular time every day to complete the log, paired with some activity they are already in the habit of doing daily, eg: during your first cup of coffee, just before going to bed, etc. Perhaps set an electronic alert to remind you.
 - Some people prefer to make entries in their log multiple times during the day, often soon after experiencing something positive. Some find it is easier to remember these experiences this way, and that it reinforces the positive feelings you get from them more effectively. You can make these ongoing entries in a notebook or electronic device which you routinely carry with you. Just make sure you make your entries at least once per day.
 - Periodically reread your Pride & Gratitude Log, or sections of it.

Gathering Evidence For & Against Core Beliefs

Keep a Daily Evidence Log: For much of our lives, our unhealthy old CBs have led us to engage in mental filtering and disqualifying the positive. This has led us to only see or value evidence that falsely seems to confirm our old CBs, which has the effect of reinforcing and strengthening these unhealthy attitudes and fueling a vicious cycle. The aim of keeping a daily Evidence Log is to retrain our minds so that we also see and value the evidence supporting our healthy new CBs and refuting the unhealthy old ones.

- Keep a daily log of evidence supporting your healthy new CBs, and/or refuting your unhealthy old CBs. Have a copy of both your old and new CBs as a bookmark in your paper journal, or as the heading on a file in your computer or mobile device. No less than once a day, ideally at about the same time each day, look at your old and new CBs. Then mentally review all the positive or partially positive events of that day that you can remember. Write down anything that you experienced that day—or even just thought about that day from further in the past—that in some way supports your new CBs and/or refutes your old CBs.
- ⇒ Be careful not to let think all-or-nothing thinking or disqualifying the positive stop you from including evidence in your log. Write down any evidence supporting your new CBs or refuting your old, no matter how small, imperfect or repeated that evidence is. And remember: evidence is observable fact. Your feelings and thoughts are not evidence.
- ⇒ Make sure that every time you conduct an experiment, write down the evidence you can garner from that experiment relating to your CBs in your Evidence Log. (See instruction sheet: Experiments to Test & Defy Unhealthy Core Beliefs.)
- ⇒ It is important that you follow the above steps and make entries into your Evidence Log EVERY DAY in order to help train your mind to pay attention to and value this positive evidence. It only need take 5 minutes or so.
- If you wish, you may combine this daily Evidence Log with the daily **Pride and Gratitude Log**, and daily **reciting your new CBs**. (See instruction sheets: Pride and Gratitude Log; and Affirming Your Healthy New CBs")
- Each day, right after making entries into your Evidence Log, write down how much you believe each of your old and new CBs: 0% = not at all; 25% = a little; 50% = moderately (ie. you are on the fence); 75% = strongly; 100% = absolutely. Core belief change is a gradual, not all-or-nothing process, with ups and downs. This will help you track progress.
- Be encouraged to revise and add to your new CBs, long or short versions, as you gather more and more evidence and develop new perspectives.
- Periodically reread your Evidence Log, or sections of it, to reinforce your healthy new CBs.

Gathering Historical Evidence: You can further strengthen your new CBs by gathering evidence from your recent or more distant past. Go through all your completed Post-Experiment Worksheets and see what evidence you could gather from those old experiments supporting your new CBs or refuting your old. You may also review different periods of your life (eg. young

childhood, adolescence, college, other periods of adulthood) and scan your memory for such evidence. Enter all this evidence you gather from your past in your Evidence Log.

Why Others Like/Admire/Respect You: Think of the people who like and respect you, both currently and in the past. Then write down all the reasons you can think of as to what do they value or admire about you. Infer this from the ways they relate(d) to you, and from things they may have said. Afterwards, consider asking a few of these individuals to tell you (ideally in writing) why they like, admire and/or respect you. Ask them to be fully honest with you. Then review what you learned about why others like/admire/respect you—both from your own work, as well as what any of these people actually told you—and enter everything that supports your new CBs or refutes your old in your Evidence Log.

Conduct Field Research: Look at your unhealthy old CBs and write down the underlying assumptions implicit/explicit in these attitudes. Then conduct a little field research to test out your assumptions.

- **Surveys:** For example, if you think it is weak or weird to experience much anxiety or do/say foolish things, then survey many people as to what makes them nervous, or what embarrassments they have experienced, or what they think when they notice someone appearing anxious or acting foolish. If you think others will not respect you for performing imperfectly or making mistakes, then survey many people as to how they react when others screw up. Remember to record your findings in your Evidence Log.
- **Systematic Observation:** For example, if you assume you have to be charismatic, interesting, funny or impressive for others to enjoy conversing with you, spend some time observing many other people's conversations. Rate how charismatic, interesting, funny or impressive they are on a scale from 0-100%. If you assume that it would be terrible to appear nervous, make mistakes, interrupt or have awkward silences, then observe how often you can find these things occurring in many other people's interactions. If you assume you are unattractive, look for the unattractive qualities in many people you think of as attractive, and look for the attractive qualities in many people you think of as unattractive. You may even observe many couples and silently rate the attractiveness of each partner to see how much of a discrepancy there is, and how subjective attractiveness really is. Whatever approach you take, record your findings in your Evidence Log.

Core Belief Continuum: Write down a healthy new CB of yours at the top of a sheet of paper or electronic file. Then draw a vertical line along the left side of the page, and scale it from 100% at the top down to 0% at the bottom. Using pencil so you can erase, write your name where you believe you belong on the scale. Then write onto the page the names or descriptors of several people (whether you know them or not) who, to varying degrees, represent your new CB or its opposite. Make sure you **include someone who is an extreme example of the opposite of your new CB at the bottom**. Review what you've written and decide if you need to move where you put your own name. Then add experiments you do in therapy on the continuum, and move your name up or down based on the evidence you are gathering.

For example, let's say your old CB is that you are socially inept and your new CB is that you have adequate social skills when you are mindfully focused. Put your name down where you believe you belong on the continuum as to how adequately socially skilled you are when you focus mindfully. Then, for 0, write down the most extremely socially unskilled person you are aware of, whether you know that person or not. Add the names of several others you know at varying points in between. Review the scale and see if you need to move where you placed your name. Now add experiments you do to the continuum, and move your name based on the evidence you gather.

Old CB	New CB
Other people's feeling and needs are more important than my own. It is best to make others happy and suppress my own needs.	I give my feelings and needs the same consideration that I give to those of others. I act as a competent advocate for myself.
I am disgusting and people want to avoid me. I should leave people alone and not bother them.	I am an average-looking guy. People are no more averse to interacting with me than they are to interacting with any average person.

Evidence Log

- 1/20/16 -- I spoke with a stranger while walking home from work. She was very pleasant and talkative. She was not afraid of me or disgusted.
- 1/22/16 -- I asserted myself with Sam, stating that I would remain in my condo during the storm. He had offered me to stay with him. Initially, I felt like I should agree, even though I didn't want to. He respected my decision to stay in my home.
- 1/23/16 -- I spoke with my neighbor while shoveling snow. She was very pleasant and didn't show signs of being uncomfortable with me.
- 1/24/16 -- I spoke with Hon, a friend with whom I had lost touch. I told him about my break-up. He was supportive and seemed genuinely interested in doing a social activity together.
- 1/25/16 -- I exchanged brief words with strangers regarding slippery walking conditions. People seemed pleasant and showed no signs of being disgusted or uncomfortable.
- 1/26/16 -- I dropped off a prescription at a pharmacy, and the pharmacist was very pleasant. He treated me with respect and seemed to see me as a valid person.

Cost-Benefit Analysis of Core Beliefs

Advantages v. Disadvantages: This exercise can help you better understand your natural ambivalence and fears about letting go of your unhealthy old beliefs and behavior patterns, and deepen your motivation to make further life changes.

- First analyze your unhealthy old CBs. Divide a sheet into two columns labeled Advantages and Disadvantages. Under Advantages, write out all the ways your old CBs have helped at some point in your life. Some of these advantages may only be short term and may result in longer-term disadvantages. Include them anyway, but make sure you put the associated disadvantages in the other column. Some of these advantages may have only been true in the past. Include these as well, but indicate they are no longer true. Do not forget to list ways that your old CBs have: provided you with protection or defense; made things easier or less effort; or given you a sense of identity / security / familiarity. Although these advantages are typically short-term and greatly outweighed by the longer-term disadvantages, they are important reasons why we tend to fear and even resist changing our unhealthy old CBs.
- Under Disadvantages, write down all the ways your old CBs have hurt you.
- When you are done, write a number from 0 to 100 at the bottom of each column to indicate the relative weight or importance of the items in that column. The two numbers should add up to 100. In determining what number to give, consider the importance of each item in your life at present, not simply the total number of items.
- Then do this same Advantages v. Disadvantages exercise for your healthy new CBs. When you are done, give each column a number indicating its relative weight. Some of these advantages and disadvantages may simply be the reverse of what you wrote on the previous worksheet, of course. Include these, nonetheless. But if you give it some thought, you are very likely to uncover unique advantages and disadvantages that are specific to your healthy new CBs.
- Periodically reread what you have written and add any additional ideas as you think of them.

Core Belief Argument: Conduct a role play with a therapist or therapy group co-member. Write out your old and new CBs. You play yourself acting as if you fully believe your new CBs. The therapist or group member plays your old CBs personified. Then go for it! Argue on behalf of your new CBs using both reason and passion (strong emotion). Do not get on the defensive. Take charge! Let your old CBs know how you feel about them and the way they have hurt you and held you back. Stand up to the critic/bully with strength and conviction. Act as if you are sick and tired of your old CBs until you really feel empowered or invigorated.

(over)

- If you have anxiety about asserting yourself with strong emotion, complete a Cognitive Restructuring worksheet about doing so before conducting the CB argument role play. Also, practice reciting your healthy new CBs (long and short versions) out loud and with oomph at least once every day as a way to both familiarize yourself with them, as well as to practice expressing them forcefully.
- Have a video recording made of this role play, and periodically watch it mindfully to reinforce your new CBs.
- Write out an argument between your old and new CBs, or between your old CBs and yourself fully believing your new CBs. Incorporate into this argument some of the key points you included in your advantages v. disadvantages worksheets (above). Make sure this argument is filled with passion on behalf of your healthy new CBs. (See sample arguments.) Periodically reread this and add any additional points as you think of them.

Core Belief Trials: In a few individual cognitive-behavioral therapy sessions, you and the therapist can prepare for and conduct a series of trials in which you serve as defense attorney refuting the charges put forth by your unhealthy old CB's prosecuting attorney, also played by you. After two or three such trials in which you successfully defend your innocence against these bogus charges, you will then have the opportunity to put the prosecuting attorney on trial for malpractice! There are simple homework activities between sessions in which you are gathering evidence to support your innocence and refute the false charges put forth by your unhealthy old CBs. These CB trials are a very powerful and often transformative strategy that greatly helps many people weaken their unhealthy old CBs and increase self-esteem and self-confidence.

ADVANTAGES v. DISADVANTAGES of UNHEALTHY OLD CORE BELIEFS

ADVANTAGES

DISADVANTAGES

_____ %

_____ %

ADVANTAGES v. DISADVANTAGES of HEALTHY NEW CORE BELIEFS

ADVANTAGES

DISADVANTAGES

_____ %

_____ %

ADVANTAGES v. DISADVANTAGES of UNHEALTHY OLD CORE BELIEFS

ADVANTAGES

- they sometimes motivate me to try really hard to improve myself and excel at what I do
- when I do well, I sometimes get praise and respect from others which feels really good
- I tend to avoid taking risks which is easier and feels safer
- this is how I'm used to seeing myself and my life; it feels familiar and secure
- when I'm unhappy, I get to feel sorry for myself which is somewhat comforting

35 %

DISADVANTAGES

- they often lead me to procrastinate when I'm concerned I won't do a good enough job
- they often cause me to worry and feel anxious about upcoming tasks and social activities
- they often lead me to feel depressed or embarrassed when I don't think I've met expectations
- I don't get to enjoy myself often because I'm so self-conscious
- it's hard to meet people and make friends
- I often withdraw from relationships rather than assert myself
- I'm afraid to let people get very close to me, assuming they'll inevitably be disappointed in me
- I don't develop new interests because I'm afraid I won't perform well enough
- I don't feel happy often because I focus mainly on my failings
- I miss out on a lot of opportunities because I feel discouraged or afraid to take risks
- life often feels like a constant struggle

65 %

ADVANTAGES v. DISADVANTAGES of HEALTHY NEW CORE BELIEFS

ADVANTAGES

- I'll procrastinate and avoid things less
- I'll be less worried and calmer
- I'll feel embarrassed and depressed less
- I'll enjoy myself more
- it'll be easier and more fun meeting people and making friends
- relationships will probably go better for me since it'll be easier to assert myself, and since I won't be so afraid of letting someone get close to me
- I'll be able to develop new interests more easily
- my life will feel fuller
- I'll feel happier more often
- I can still try to improve myself and excel, but not so desperately as before
- it'll still feel good to get praise and respect from others, but it'll be less upsetting when I don't
- it'll probably hurt a lot less when other reject me because I'll feel a lot better about myself
- although it may be challenging and feel unnatural at first, this new self-concept and lifestyle will probably get easier with time

60 %

DISADVANTAGES

- I may feel less motivated to try hard to improve myself and to excel
- I may not get as much praise and respect from others for excelling
- I will be taking risks a lot more often, which seems very scary and threatening
- I'll be rejected more often if I socialize more and also let people get closer to me
- it's going to be very hard and feel unnatural to try to change my self-concept and lifestyle after growing so used to the old ways

40 %

Core Belief Argument

Old CBs: "So how is that group going?"

Me: "Well. Although I have a ways to go I can see that I have really made some progress."

Old CBs: "That's too bad. You know you're just going to go back to the way you were. Your opinions aren't as important as others and you know that. Whenever you want something you have to get the courage to ask for it – why? Because you're not as important as other people."

Me: "Wrong. The reason I have to get the courage is because I've believed for too long that I wasn't important. But now I know that is unhealthy thinking. I'm just as important as everyone else."

Old CBs: "...Ok. I don't think you really believe that. You're just saying that because you're supposed to."

Me: "No. I'm actually starting to believe it. And the more I say it out loud with oomph to myself, the stronger it will get and the weaker you become."

Old CBs: "Whatever. You're just going to avoid continuing this process once the group is over. Just like you always do – avoid the problems and hope they just go away."

Me: "Maybe in the past you're right. But I have the tools and skills now to see that that is wrong. If I avoid problems, sure, they may go away. But that's just luck. If they don't go away I'm only compounding the problem by not dealing with it. I'm going to stick to this program even after it's officially over."

Old CBs: "But what if the problems are situations that are unpleasant? Your tendency is to ...run away."

Me: "I know, but let me clarify. That is my old tendency. Running away never solved anything for me. Even if the unpleasant feelings never happened because of escaping, I feel bad anyways for missing out on all the adventures, fun and life in general in the past 16 years. That is more important to me than escaping unpleasant feelings. Besides, without the unpleasant feelings, the pleasant ones don't feel as good."

Old CBs: "What about what others think? Isn't it necessary to please others and give up what you think in order for them to like you?"

Me: "Again, I used to think that way. And look where it's gotten me. I'm still angry for all of the things I gave up just in order to please someone else. It's great to be able to

please someone else, but not at the risk of constantly giving up what I want. It makes me angry.”

Old CBs: “But you were nervous of what they’d think. Speaking of being nervous, that is something to be ashamed of. You need to continue hiding this.”

Me: “No, it’s not something to be ashamed of and I’m not sure how I ended up down this path thinking that. Everyone gets nervous from time to time and it’s much more important to stay mindful of the situation I’m in and how I feel. What’s wrong with being nervous?”

Old CBs: “Everything. If they can tell you’re nervous, then they can see a weakness in you.”

Me: “If they think being nervous is a weakness then they are just as bad as you. And I already know you’re unhealthy. Being nervous is not a weakness. As I said before, everyone gets that way from time to time. It’s an evolutionary behavior we’ve learned as humans – it helps us! It’s nothing to be ashamed of.”

Old CBs: “Evolutionary step. Ok, well you’re definitely a step apart from other people. Admit it. You’re different from others and don’t really fit in.”

Me: “Uh ...everyone is different. There’s no ‘normal’ person. It’s what makes the world what it is. Accepting these differences for what they are is what life is all about!”

Letting Go of the Past

Read your unhealthy old CBs and ask yourself: How did I come to learn these things? Think about the earliest memories of feeling the social anxiety or depression your old CBs currently make you feel. What painful experiences from your youth that may have shaped your life attitudes? Remember the persons that shaped and reinforced these old CBs. Think about your parents and whoever else helped raise you. Think about your siblings, extended family, teachers, peers, neighbors, religious leaders and anyone else who was important in your life as a child, teen or younger adult. If you are lesbian, gay, bi or trans, think about your coming-out history. In all cases, keep asking yourself: What did these people and experiences teach me about myself, about people and about the world? Then choose one or more of the following strategies to help you weaken the power of these past experiences on you.

Then v. Now: Old painful memories and images are linked to present-day core beliefs and social anxiety. Pick one or two situations in which you feel very socially anxious currently. Then close your eyes for a few minutes and imagine yourself and others in that situation. *Focus on how you fear you and others appear and behave.* What are the unhealthy old core beliefs that this image is tied to? Then identify one or more of your earliest memories of feeling this way. Spend a few minutes focusing on those memories. See the image of yourself and others: how you and they appear and behave. Is this remembered image similar to your image of yourself and others now in adulthood when you are socially anxious?

Open your eyes and write down each way in which you and the others in your memory are different now than you were then, in your painful memories. Include all the differences you can think of, no matter how small. Include in this list evidence you have gathered from social anxiety experiments you've done. Then, *during all your conversations and other interactions in the coming week in which you feel anxious, focus on all the ways you see differences in yourself and the others now v. in your memories.* Add any additional differences you notice to your written list. This will help you break the link between your past image of yourself and present-day reality and feelings.

Letter Writing (Assertion & Forgiveness): Write one or more letters to those who helped to teach you your unhealthy old CBs. Address three things in the letter(s): 1. what you learned from these people; 2. how these lessons have affected you at different points in your life; and 3. take responsibility for what you need to learn and do to overcome this person's negative influence on your life. Express yourself with strong feeling. Don't hold yourself back. Don't edit or censor or be diplomatic. (Worry not; you will not send these letters!) Don't forget to include the third point of the letter: the specific ways that you need to change what you have learned from these people and experiences. This is a letter about taking personal responsibility, not just blaming.

Consider adding a fourth section in your letter in which you express forgiveness. Note: forgiveness doesn't have to mean exonerating or pardoning or even understanding the person and what s/he has done to you. Forgiveness can simply mean letting go of resentment and anger you bear toward him/her. Thus, forgiveness is something you do for yourself as much as—or more than—for the person you forgive.

Save and reread the letter periodically. Write additional letters as the need arises. If you feel the desire to actually send such a letter, hold onto it for at least a few days. Consider what the consequences may be of sending the letter. Consider whether you wish to edit it in a way that may be more hearable to the recipient, and help make yourself better understood.

(over)

Role Playing: After writing the letter, try conducting role plays in which you confront the teacher(s) of your unhealthy old CBs. You play yourself acting as if you believe your healthy new CBs with total confidence and conviction, with no doubt whatsoever. A therapist or therapy group comember plays one of the teachers of your unhealthy old CBs. Alternatively, an empty chair can silently stand for that person you are confronting. Express yourself with both reason and passion (strong emotion). Alternatively—or in addition—you may prefer to focus the role play on expressing forgiveness. You may also find it helpful to do this exercise as a written argument/dialog. (See Core Belief Argument in the Cost-Benefit Analysis instruction sheet.)

Imagery Rescripting: Follow the steps in the Imagery to Strengthen Healthy New CBs instruction sheet. Then pick an important person or troubling event from your past that helped form or reinforce your unhealthy old CBs. First visualize yourself as you were in the past (a child, teen or younger adult) with the person(s) or in the event that you picked. Then visualize yourself as an adult who fully believes your healthy new CBs with complete confidence and conviction. Enter the scene as an adult, and assert yourself with the other person(s) there. Defend and support your younger self in the scene, and encourage the younger you to stand up for him/herself. Repeat this over and over until you feel self-confident and strong. Afterwards, you may wish to focus the imagery on *forgiving* the person: not necessarily exonerating or even understanding him/her, but simply choosing to let go of your resentment and anger toward the offender(s).

You may want to include in your imagery a discussion in which your adult self counsels your younger self to view the experience of hurt differently: as representing problems on the part of the person(s) who hurt you, and NOT representing anything wrong with you. Conclude your imagery by focusing on a snapshot image of your confident self, or a symbol/icon representing your healthy new core beliefs, and silently recite a short version of your healthy new beliefs. Practice bringing up this snapshot image of your confident self, or the icon of your healthy new core beliefs, briefly but repeatedly every day. Repeat the healthy new CB phrase as you do so.

Advantage v. Disadvantages: Do a pair of Advantages v. Disadvantages worksheets concerning present-day hurt and anger about experiences or people from the past. One worksheet would examine the advantages v. disadvantages of holding onto this hurt and anger; the second worksheet would examine the advantages v. disadvantages of letting go of this hurt and anger. (See Advantages v. Disadvantages in the Cost-Benefit Analysis instruction sheet.)

Gathering Historical Evidence: Review your life, period by period, and record evidence supporting your healthy new CBs in a daily Evidence Log. You may also want to write about why certain people who have been positive influences in your life liked, admired or respected you. (See the first three sections of the Gathering Evidence instruction sheet.)

Rituals: Try creating and conducting a ritual (a symbolic action) aimed at helping you let go of hurt and anger regarding experiences or people from the past. You may also devise a ritual aimed at helping you forgive others or forgive yourself. Be creative. An effective ritual involves symbolic actions that are infused with personal meaning. You may also want to do the ritual in a location filled with personal meaning, or using objects filled with personal meaning. It might help you to repeat or modify the ritual from time to time.

Core Belief Trials: In a few individual cognitive-behavioral therapy sessions, you and the therapist can prepare for and conduct a series of trials in which you serve as defense attorney refuting the charges put forth by your unhealthy old CB's prosecuting attorney, also played by you. After two or three such trials in which you successfully defend your innocence against these bogus charges, you will then have the opportunity to put the prosecuting attorney on trial for malpractice! There are simple homework activities between sessions in which you are gathering evidence to support your innocence and refute the false charges put forth by your unhealthy old CBs. These CB trials are a very powerful and often transformative strategy that greatly helps many people weaken their unhealthy old CBs and increase self-esteem and self-confidence.

Imagery to Strengthen Healthy New Core Beliefs

Pick a present-day situation that activates your unhealthy old core beliefs: ie. that makes you upset, anxious or avoid something. You may wish to pick a trigger that you are planning to experience in the near future, and use the exercise below to prepare yourself for it.

Get into a relaxed position when you are alone. Breathe slowly and deeply for a few minutes. Make sure you are filling your lungs completely: your belly should go out when you breathe in, and go in when you breathe out. Try to pay attention solely to your breathing, or to a relaxing phrase (eg. "let go") you silently say in rhythm with your breath. Your mind will wander at times throughout this exercise. When it does, just note the distraction without judgment or frustration, and then gently redirect your attention back to your breathing. Do this as frequently as necessary, but always gently (without judgment or frustration).

After you have the hang of this and are feeling pretty relaxed, read your healthy new CBs a few times slowly as you continue to breathe in this manner. Close your eyes and focus on a phrase or sentence that comes from or represents your healthy new CBs while you continue your relaxed breathing. Let the phrase evolve on its own.

Begin to visualize yourself in the situation you picked that activates your unhealthy old CBs. First set the scene: try to see, in your mind's eye, the place, objects and persons that are there. Focus on one of these things until it looks vivid. Pay attention to the colors you see, the sounds you hear, the things you smell and/or the textures you feel. Look down in your mind's eye and see your hands and legs. Make sure you are present in this scene.

Then play out the scene acting as if you fully believed your healthy new CBs. Replay that scene over and over and over until it seems more vivid and you feel stronger and more confident. Don't focus on how others in the scene are reacting to you because that's not in your control. Instead, play the scene over and over with an increasing sense of strength and self-confidence regardless of the reactions you get. Keep up the slow, deep, steady breathing throughout. Silently recite phrases from your healthy new CBs before or during each scene repetition as an aid to increase your self-confidence. Let these phrases evolve into whatever you find most useful. Be persistent. You may need to repeat the scene many several before you feel strong and self-confident. Then focus on **a snapshot image of your confident self** in this scene for a couple minutes. Alternatively, choose and focus on **a symbol or icon that, to you, represents your healthy new core beliefs**. As you do so, repeat the new CB phrases you found most helpful.

Practice bringing up this snapshot image of your confident self, or the icon of your healthy new core beliefs, briefly but repeatedly every day. Repeat the healthy new CB phrase as you do so. Then try to bring it up this image/icon and phrase when your old core beliefs are activated (ie. when you are upset, anxious or avoiding something), or when you are about to do a challenging experiment.

LIEBOWITZ SOCIAL ANXIETY SCALE

Name _____

Date _____

This questionnaire assesses the way that social anxiety plays a role in your life across a variety of situations. Read each situation carefully and answer two questions about that situation. The first question asks how anxious or fearful you feel in the situation. The second question asks how often you avoid the situation.

It is important to answer each of the questions. Please base your answers on the way that the situations have affected you in the last week.

If you come across a situation that you ordinarily do not experience, please imagine "what if you were faced with that situation," and then rate the degree to which you would fear this hypothetical situation and how often you would tend to avoid it.

Anxiety/Fear

- 0 = none
- 1 = mild
- 2 = moderate
- 3 = severe

Avoidance

- 0 = never (0%)
- 1 = occasionally (1-33%)
- 2 = often (34-66%)
- 3 = usually (67-100%)

- | | | |
|--|----------------|------------------|
| 1. Telephoning in public | Anxiety = ____ | Avoidance = ____ |
| 2. Participating in small group activities | Anxiety = ____ | Avoidance = ____ |
| 3. Eating in public | Anxiety = ____ | Avoidance = ____ |
| 4. Drinking with others | Anxiety = ____ | Avoidance = ____ |
| 5. Talking to someone in authority | Anxiety = ____ | Avoidance = ____ |
| 6. Acting, performing, or speaking
in front of an audience | Anxiety = ____ | Avoidance = ____ |
| 7. Going to a party | Anxiety = ____ | Avoidance = ____ |
| 8. Working while being observed | Anxiety = ____ | Avoidance = ____ |
| 9. Writing while being observed | Anxiety = ____ | Avoidance = ____ |
| 10. Calling someone you don't know very well | Anxiety = ____ | Avoidance = ____ |
| 11. Talking face to face with someone
you don't know very well | Anxiety = ____ | Avoidance = ____ |
| 12. Meeting strangers | Anxiety = ____ | Avoidance = ____ |
| 13. Urinating in a public bathroom | Anxiety = ____ | Avoidance = ____ |
| 14. Entering a room when others are already seated | Anxiety = ____ | Avoidance = ____ |
| 15. Being the center of attention | Anxiety = ____ | Avoidance = ____ |
| 16. Speaking up at a meeting | Anxiety = ____ | Avoidance = ____ |
| 17. Taking a test | Anxiety = ____ | Avoidance = ____ |
| 18. Expressing disagreement or disapproval
to someone you don't know very well | Anxiety = ____ | Avoidance = ____ |
| 19. Looking someone who you don't know very well
straight in the eyes | Anxiety = ____ | Avoidance = ____ |
| 20. Giving a report/presentation to a group | Anxiety = ____ | Avoidance = ____ |
| 21. Trying to make someone's acquaintance
for the purpose of a romantic/sexual relationship | Anxiety = ____ | Avoidance = ____ |
| 22. Returning goods to a store for a refund | Anxiety = ____ | Avoidance = ____ |
| 23. Giving a party | Anxiety = ____ | Avoidance = ____ |
| 24. Resisting a high pressure sales person | Anxiety = ____ | Avoidance = ____ |

Total anxiety score = _____ Total avoidance score = _____ Grand total score = _____

Social Anxiety Weekly Summary Scale

Name _____

Date _____

→ Please select one number from 0 to 8 to indicate how disturbing and/or disabling your social anxiety has been during the PAST WEEK.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
not at all slightly moderately very extremely

→ Please select one number from 0 to 8 to indicate to how often during the PAST WEEK you have avoided difficult social or performance situations (or aspects of those situations).

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
never rarely sometimes often always

→ During the PAST WEEK, for social and performance situations IN GENERAL, please select one number from 0 to 8 to show the extent to which your attention was focused internally (on yourself and your concerns) or on the external situation itself.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
entirely EXTERNALLY focused (on the situation itself) equally EXTERNALLY & INTERNALLY focused entirely INTERNALLY focused (on yourself & your concerns)

→ During the PAST WEEK, for social and performance situations that you found DIFFICULT, please select one number from 0 to 8 to show the extent to which your attention was focused internally (on yourself and your concerns) or on the external situation itself.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
entirely EXTERNALLY focused (on the situation itself) equally EXTERNALLY & INTERNALLY focused entirely INTERNALLY focused (on yourself & your concerns)

→ During the PAST WEEK, how often have you worried about things you thought might go wrong in a difficult social or performance situation BEFORE entering that situation?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
never rarely sometimes often always

→ During the PAST WEEK, how often have you ruminated about things you thought might have gone wrong during a difficult social or performance situation AFTER that situation has finished?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
never rarely sometimes often always