

Tracking Your Progress

Anonymous4.2K reads

Now that you know why exposure is so significant for coping with anxiety, you are ready for the next step. That is, in fact, everything you've learnt so far. Once you have started applying the techniques you now know, it is essential to track your progress, and you are about to find out exactly why.

Surely, you've already made the decision to face your anxiety and fear of public speaking. That is the first and most crucial step. Naturally, you can't expect progress without engaging in systematic and determined action. But, what comes next is also significant.



The banner features the Explorable logo at the top center, with the text "EXPLORABLE" in a large, bold, sans-serif font and "Quiz Time!" in a smaller, cursive font below it. Below the logo are three square images, each with a caption underneath. The first image shows a pair of red roller skates on a wooden floor, with the caption "Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2". The second image shows a fan of colorful pens, also with the caption "Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2". The third image shows a Ferris wheel at sunset, with the caption "Quiz: Flags in Europe". To the right of these images is a link that says "See all quizzes =>".

Learning Is Crucial, But Not Enough

Knowing and using techniques for reducing your fear or anxiety is essential, but not enough. As you already know, exposing yourself to public speaking is necessary, as hard as it may be at first. The techniques you've learned will help you to work on your thoughts and emotions, but a boost of behavioral focus can go a great way. That's where exposure jumps in.

Why Track Your Progress?

After you practice and become familiar with all of the techniques you're learned here, you can create a plan for action. A useful strategy is to keep a journal of all relevant information you

learn from experience, so you can occasionally go back and analyze your progress. Keep in mind that some exercises will be easier than others. That's why it's important to take as much time as you need, yet balance that with constantly challenging and pushing yourself. Otherwise, you run the risk of slipping back into experiential avoidance.

What to Include

Here are some of the main topics you can include in your progress-tracking. Of course, you can come up with your own, to add to these:

- What are you trying to accomplish? Don't define your goal only as "I want to become a better public speaker". Remember that your goals should be value-based and should meet the SMART criterion.
- Why is it important to you? This part is about your values and actual reasons why you want to overcome your fear. It will serve as your guide if you ever lose focus.
- How are you going to accomplish that? What are the exact things that you will do to achieve your goals? Which techniques you will use? How will you expose yourself to circumstances that trigger your anxiety?
- When will you do it? Define a day range or, better yet, create a specific and realistic schedule, that is time-based and helps keep you both motivated and accountable in front of your self.

Sample Plan

General plan:	
What do I want to accomplish?	How?
I want to speak in public at least two times during the next month and face my fear.	By practicing the techniques, I've learned and exposing myself to public speaking.
Why is this important to me?	I want to become a better public speaker and grow to be a better version of myself.

Detailed plan:	
What?	How?
Preparation (learning about the techniques, creating a plan, etc.)	Reading and, if need be, rereading the other materials and understanding the ways I can overcome my fears
Identifying cognitive distortions	Filling the worksheet for identification of cognitive distortions
Disputing cognitive distortions	Questioning identified distortions and coming up with more rational alternatives
Using imagination to prepare for my next public speech	Rehearsing my next public speech in my mind with creating several different scenarios
Practice mindfulness	Each morning and evening I'll practice mindfulness
Mindful and self-compassionate work on acceptance of my feelings and thoughts	Coming up with self-compassionate alternative thoughts
Creating my ABC model	Identifying my Bs and Cs, relevant to public speaking
Exposure 1	I will ask a question to a group of people in another public place; I won't be talking to just one individual in the group, but rather to everyone
Exposure 2	I will ask my professor a question and discuss it with him in front of the entire class

Don't forget that you can return to any one of the techniques, whenever you need to, and improve your performance. Also, you can also use the time frame for coping with other aspects of your goal, which we will address a bit later on.

How to Keep up with Your Progress

After you've created a specific plan and have started pursuing goals defined by that plan, you should keep track of your progress. Here's the form you can use for that. Make sure you fill it regularly and describe your experience, including your thoughts and emotions:

Progress Journal		
Date:	Planned Activity:	Performed Activity:
April 13th	Mindful and self-compassionate work on acceptance of my feelings and thoughts	I created my schedule and wrote the plan. I can always have a plan.

Consider Your Schedule

When creating a plan, be realistic. Think about your daily routine and how much time you'll have for executing your plan. Creating a program that simply doesn't fit into your schedule, will only enable procrastination. Naturally, that doesn't mean that being busy should be used as an excuse, but rather that you should strive to find a balance between challenging yourself, and staying realistic.

Be Honest and Open with Yourself

When writing about your progress, be honest. If you didn't accomplish what you intended, reschedule it for another day and try to find the reason why you're not following the plan. The idea is neither to beat yourself up, nor to allow yourself to slack off, but rather to understand and improve upon yourself. Being as honest as possible will only work to your benefit – after all, the journal is meant just for you, and it is your personal key to unlocking the door of confident public speaking.

When to Write

What is most important, is always to write down your conclusions, thoughts, emotions and everything else that is relevant to you. It's best to do that after you finish a task when your impressions are still fresh. You can also broaden your plan and include other activities you plan to perform, within your preparation.

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