

# Helpful Hints for Facing Your Fears

Overcoming a fear can take courage and hard work! Here are some things that can help, as you take steps toward situations you fear or avoid:

Ask yourself 'What am I afraid of?'	It's important to identify your core fears. What are you afraid will happen? Do you think you'll get hurt? Will you be embarrassed? Will you be rejected? Will you fail? Once you know what you fear, write it down so that you can document afterwards whether it happened or not. Think of the exposures as mini-experiments.
Use rewards	Exposure can (and should!) be challenging. Identify some rewards that can help you stay motivated. For example, after your hard work, can you spend time doing something you enjoy? Get yourself a treat? Make sure not to give yourself the reward until you've tried the exposure. And remember to reward effort, not the outcome.
Find support	Identify a friend, family member, or trusted adult to encourage you and hold you accountable. Your support person should understand why you're facing your fears and how exposure works (you can explain it!). Then if you think about giving up, that person can help keep you on track.
Change it up	Try your exposures at home, at school, in town, etc. The more varied and unpredictable your exposures, the better they will work.
Track your progress	Use a calendar, journal, or log book to chart your exposures. Include the date, exposure, time, and fear rating before and after.
Allow yourself to experience the anxiety	On your <u>Feelings Thermometer</u> , your anxiety should be about a 5-7 at the beginning of your exposure. If you use relaxation strategies during the exposure, it won't work as well since part of exposure is learning to trust that you can cope with the anxiety, and that often the anxiety will go away on its own. Stay focused on the exposure while it's happening, even though it may be tempting to distract yourself. Then, make sure to think about what you have learned after you finish the exposure (Was it as hard as you expected? Were you able to tolerate the anxiety? Did your fear come true?).

Sometimes the **fear won't go away**  
so you'll just have to **do it afraid**.