Cycle of Avoidance



The avoidance cycle, sometimes referred to as the anxiety avoidance cycle, is a pattern in which people who are afraid or anxious avoid situations or stimuli that make them feel those emotions. Although avoidance offers short-term respite, it eventually exacerbates the dread and anxiety, making it more difficult to face and control.

Trigger

A situation, thought or sensation makes you feel anxious. For example, someone might invite you to a party

Anxiety

Your mind and body react to the trigger, maybe with worry or an increased heart rate. In the example, you might imagine that people at the party will judge you

Short-term relief long-term worsening

In the moment the anxiety is alleviated, but the fear stays in the mind, adding to the potential anxiety next time. You feel calmer missing the party, but next time you are invited somewhere the fear response is stronger.

Avoidance

You avoid the trigger as a way of avoiding the anxious feelings. You don't go to the party, but stay home where you feel more comfortable