WORKSHEET 21 · FOR THE PSYCHOLOGIST

Doing the opposite of what fear dictates

Opposite action (DBT)

AIM

When fear is not justified by the facts or is out of proportion, learn to act in the opposite way to what it pushes you to do (approaching instead of avoiding), fully and repeatedly.

WHO IT IS FOR

Avoidance due to fear or shame, social isolation. Adults and adolescents.

DURATION

15 min in session; practice between sessions

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Identify the emotion and what it pushes the person to do (flee, avoid, hide).
2. Check the facts: does the situation justify the fear? Is its intensity proportionate?
3. If not: define the opposite action (approaching, staying, speaking), including posture, eye contact and tone of voice.
4. Do it fully (not half-heartedly) and repeat it until the fear goes down.
5. If the fear is justified, work on problem solving instead.

POINTS TO WATCH

> Opposite action does not apply when fear signals a real danger. It resembles exposure: proceed in steps (worksheet 09) rather than going straight to the hardest situation.

REFERENCES

Linehan, M. M. (2015). DBT Skills Training Manual (2nd ed.). Guilford.

Barlow, D. H., Sauer-Zavala, S., Farchione, T. J. et al. (2018). Unified Protocol for Transdiagnostic Treatment of Emotional Disorders: Therapist Guide (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.

PSYCHOLOGIST'S NOTES

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WORKSHEET 21 · WORKSHEET TO HAND OUT

Doing the opposite of what fear dictates

Best done with your psychologist

Fear pushes you to run away or avoid. When the facts don't justify it, doing the opposite (approaching, staying) is often what brings it down.

1. My emotion and what it pushes me to do: _____
2. The facts: is the fear justified? Is it proportionate? _____
3. If not, the opposite action (what I do, how I hold myself, how I speak): _____
4. I do it fully and repeat it.

Situation	What fear pushed me to do	What I did instead	Fear afterwards /10

What did I discover by doing the opposite?

These exercises do not replace therapy. If you are in distress or having suicidal thoughts: 112 (European Union), 3114 (France) or the emergency number of the country where you live.

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