WORKSHEET 69 · FOR THE PSYCHOLOGIST

Bringing on the sensations on purpose

Learning that the sensations of anxiety are not dangerous (interoceptive exposure)

AIM

Deliberately bring on, in a controlled way, sensations similar to those of panic (dizziness, breathlessness, racing heart) to learn that they are bearable and not dangerous.

WHO IT IS FOR

Panic disorder, fear of bodily sensations. With a psychologist, after the work on the panic cycle (worksheet 68).

DURATION

20-30 min in session; repetitions at home

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Check there is no medical contraindication (heart problem, asthma, epilepsy, pregnancy, back or neck problems).
2. Try out a few exercises in session: spinning in a chair, breathing fast for 30 seconds, climbing stairs, breathing through a straw.
3. For each exercise: intensity of the sensations, similarity to panic, anxiety (0-10).
4. Repeat the most similar exercises until anxiety goes down, without safety behaviours.

POINTS TO WATCH

> Check medical contraindications before any exercise; seek medical advice if in doubt. Voluntary hyperventilation is not recommended with asthma, epilepsy or heart problems.

REFERENCES

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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 69 · WORKSHEET TO HAND OUT

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Best done with your psychologist

When you fear your sensations, you try to avoid them. Bringing them on deliberately, in small doses and safely, teaches your body and mind that they pass and are not dangerous. Do it with your psychologist.

1. With my psychologist, I check that I have no medical contraindication.
2. I choose an exercise (spinning in a chair, breathing fast, climbing stairs…).
3. I do it, without protecting myself, and note my sensations and my anxiety.
4. I repeat it until the anxiety goes down.

Exercise	Sensations /10	Similar to panic /10	Anxiety /10

What do I learn about my sensations?

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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