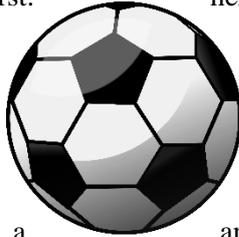




# Practising

## How Will Practising Help My Child?

Practice is the best possible way to overcome fear because it helps your child get used to doing things that are difficult at first. Through practice, your child will quickly learn to do things that were too hard before. Practising to reduce fear and anxiety is a lot like practising a musical instrument or a sport. A child who practises guitar will get better at playing guitar. A child who practises football will get better at playing football. And



a child who practises doing the things that make him or her nervous will get better – less nervous – at doing those things. For example, with practice, a child who is nervous around dogs can become more comfortable around them. Practising things that cause anxiety may not feel good at the time, just as music practice and exercise drills might not always seem fun. Practice is not always easy, but you can make

### Practice can decrease anxiety about:

- Animals • High places • Riding the bus • Going to school • Being teased • Being embarrassed • Swimming • Being in the dark • Being away from parents • Talking to other people • Trying to be perfect • Feeling out of breath • Feeling out of control • Getting a shot • Being around adults • Being around other children • Many other things

things easier by offering help and support to your child.

## How Do We Practise?

Practice is similar to physical exercise. Your child will need to start slowly, with small tasks. Then, as your child gets in shape, he or she can take on bigger challenges and practise more often. We will work together with your child to make sure he or she is practising the right amount.

<p><b>1 Choose a target fear</b></p>	<p>Pick a fear you'd like your child to work on (e.g., standing near a dog, sleeping over at a friend's house, or talking to other children). Try to start with something that is not too challenging. You might even want to break things down into steps so your child can work on one smaller, easier thing at a time. Your child can move on to more difficult things as he or she progresses.</p> <p><b>A fear I would like to see go away is:</b></p> <p>.....</p>
<p><b>2 Pick a time to practise</b></p>	<p>Choose a time when everything is calm and no one feels rushed. Sometimes practice can take a while, so remember to leave plenty of time.</p> <p><b>An example of a good time to help my child practice is:</b></p> <p>.....</p>
<p><b>3 Take ratings</b></p>	<p>Take ratings every few minutes. Remember, the ratings range from 0 to 10, and higher numbers mean higher amounts of fear or anxiety. Over time, our goal is for the numbers to go down. Use the Practice Record to keep track of the ratings. This is the best way to see how well the practice is working and to figure out what to practise next.</p>

4 Be Patient	Sometimes it will take a while for your child to get used to something. Small children might even cry or protest during practice. Wait as long as you need to, stick with the practice, and keep telling your child how well he or she is doing. It may seem to take a long time, but soon your child will get used to whatever he or she is practising.
5 Practise, practise, practise	Once you and your child get the hang of things, you can repeat a practice as much as you want. It's a lot like exercise: the more your child does, the better your child will feel. This is the best way to help your child with anxiety or fears. But don't forget to leave some time for fun things, too!
6 Move on to something harder	Once your child gets comfortable with a certain practice, you can try something a little tougher. Again, this is just like exercise. If your child can lift 5 pounds easily, he or she can try moving 6 or 7. Just be careful not to make things too hard too fast. Otherwise, your child might become frustrated. We can help you figure out what to practice and how quickly to increase the difficulty of practice.
7 Keep a regular routine	It's important to help your child "stay in shape." Even after something gets easier, you'll want to have your child practise it again every once in a while, just to make sure it sticks.
8 Praise & Support	Your child will need plenty of praise and support from as many people as possible. Practice can seem boring sometimes but it is the very best way to stop feeling nervous or afraid. It will be worth the effort, so try to encourage your child and help him or her stay interested.

## Help! Practice Isn't Working!

**PROBLEM:** My child's ratings won't go down.

**TRY THIS:** *The things you are practising might be too hard for right now. Try working on something else, or breaking things into smaller steps. Another possibility is that the practices may be too short, not giving your child enough time to get used to things. Eventually your child's fear or anxiety will decrease, and the ratings will come down.*

**PROBLEM:** My child's ratings go down, but the next time we practise, the ratings are right back up where they started.

**TRY THIS:** *Usually when this happens, it means there has been too much time between practising. If you've been practising once or twice a week, try increasing to four or five times a week. Sometimes, you might need to practise every single day to see the ratings go down.*

**PROBLEM:** My child is too scared to get started.

**TRY THIS:** *This means you may be trying to do too much at once. Try breaking things down into smaller steps. Try to think of ways to make the practice easier without making it shorter. There are other solutions we can try, too, so don't be afraid to ask us for help.*

**PROBLEM:** My child's ratings are going up, not down!

**TRY THIS:** *This can happen if you stop in the middle of practice or if the practices are too short. Be sure to allow plenty of time in each practice for the ratings to come down. For now, you might try going back to something easier.*

**PROBLEM:** My child says he or she doesn't need to practise anymore.

**TRY THIS:** *Explain that practice is about building a skill. If you don't use it, you may lose it. Even when things aren't hard anymore, it's important to check back to make sure you can still do them. This is how you can keep the fear or anxiety from coming back.*