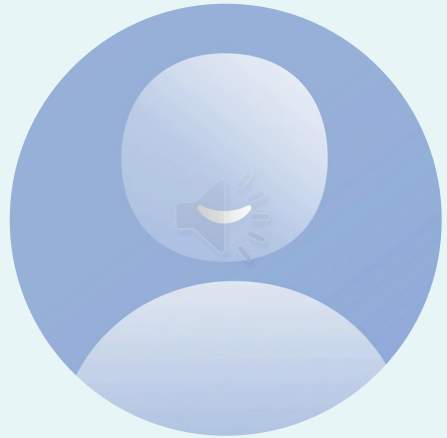
MATCH: Modular Approach to Therapy for Children

Anxiety Focus



NHS England
UCL GREAT ORMOND STREET INSTITUTE OF CHILD HEALTH
FUNDED BY NIHR National Institute for Health Research

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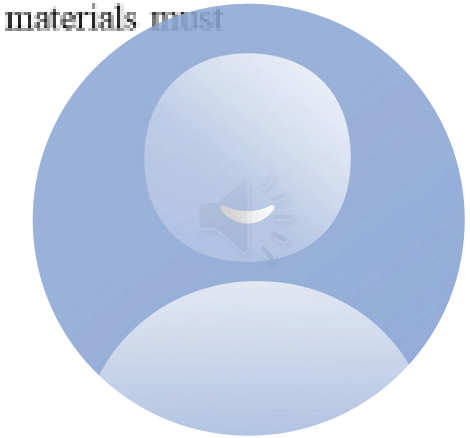

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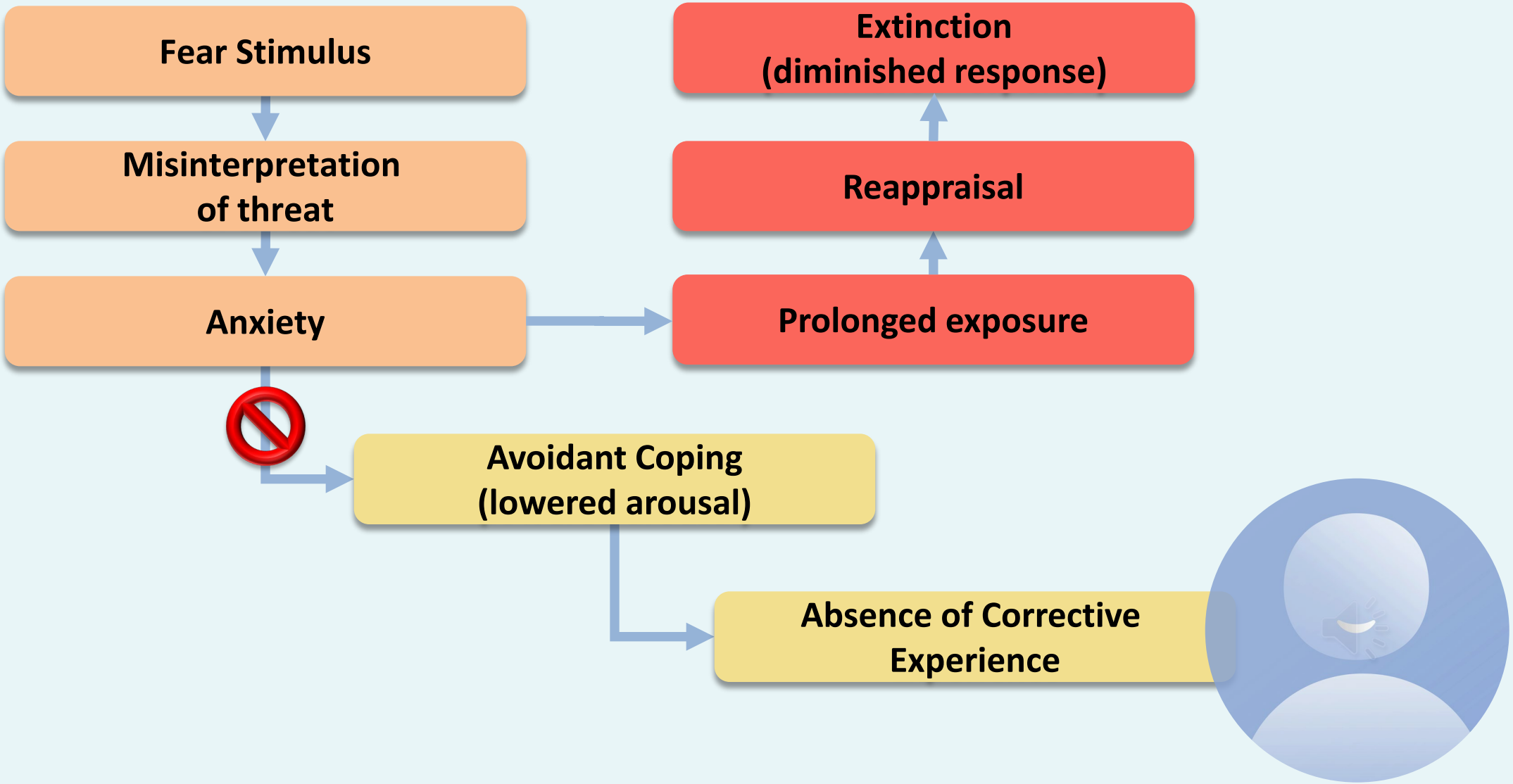
Anxiety Disorders Appropriate for MATCH-ADTC

- Separation anxiety disorder
- Generalized anxiety disorder
- Social anxiety disorder
- Specific Phobia
- Panic Disorder with/without Agoraphobia
- Other disorders not listed as Anxiety in DSM-V
  - Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (requires slight modifications)
  - Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

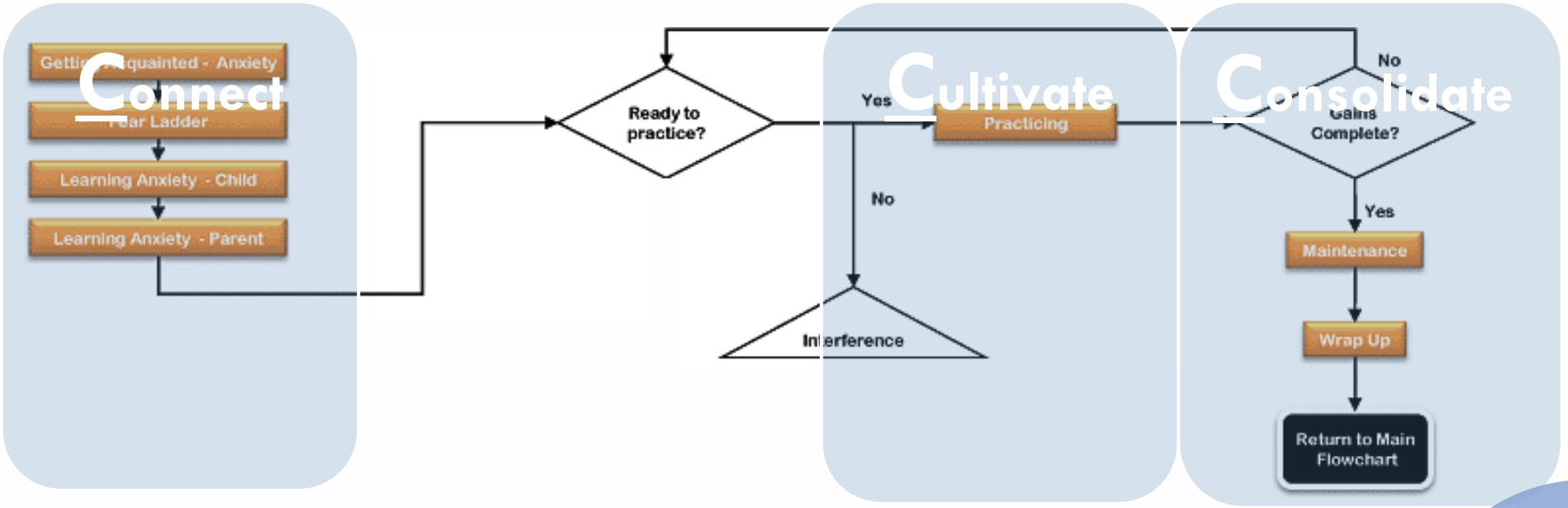
Basic Anxiety Treatment Model

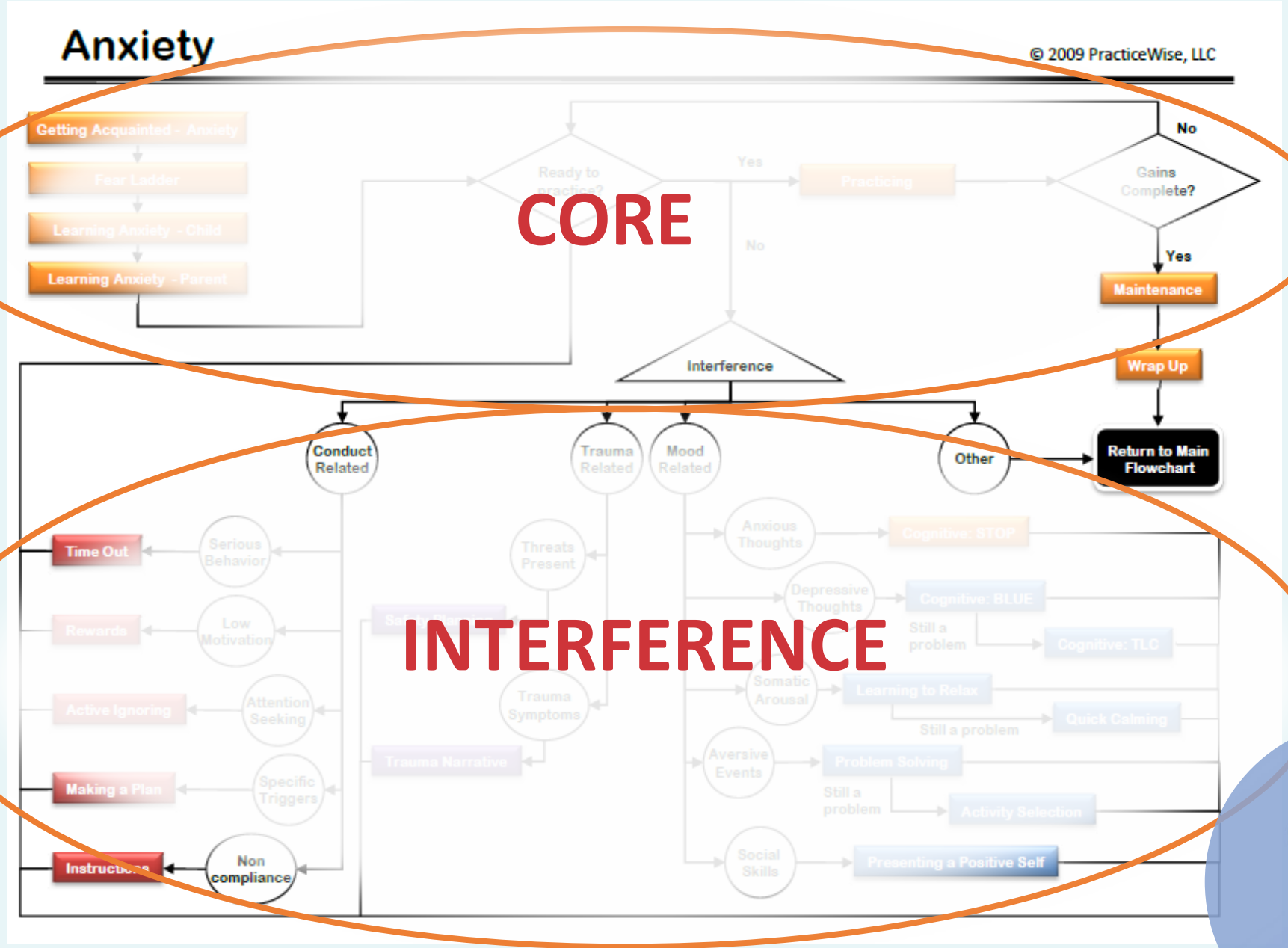


MATCH-ADTC Modules for Anxiety Disorders

- Getting Acquainted
- Fear Ladder
- Learning About Anxiety - Child
- Learning About Anxiety - Parent
- Practicing (Exposure)
- Maintenance
- Wrap-up
- Other common modules:
  - Cognitive STOP
  - Rewards
  - Learning to Relax

Anxiety Flowchart




Anxiety
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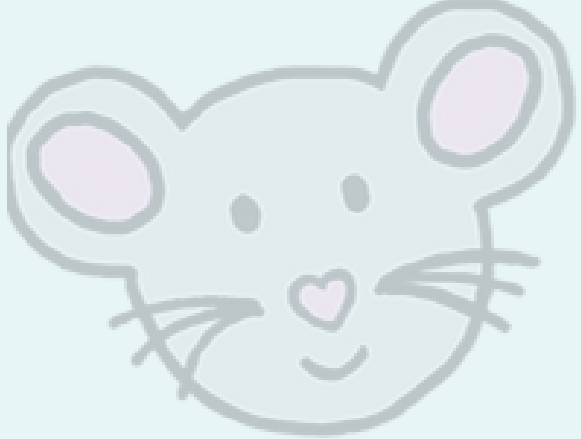
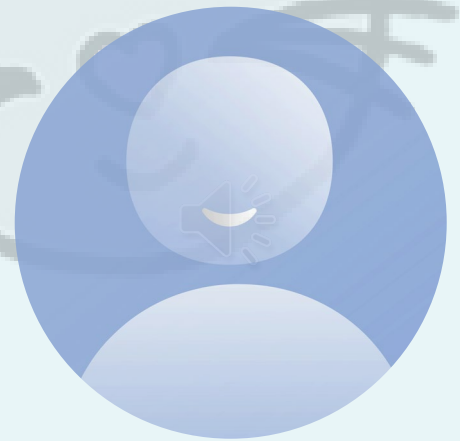
CORE
INTERFERENCE
Getting Acquainted - Anxiety
Fear Ladder
Learning Anxiety - Child
Learning Anxiety - Parent
Ready to practice?
Yes
No
Practicing
Gains Complete?
No
Yes
Maintenance
Wrap Up
Return to Main Flowchart
Interference
Conduct Related
Trauma Related
Mood Related
Other
Time Out
Serious Behavior
Rewards
Low Motivation
Active Ignoring
Attention Seeking
Making a Plan
Specific Triggers
Instructions
Non compliance
Threats Present
Trauma Symptoms
Trauma Narrative
Anxious Thoughts
Cognitive: STOP
Depressive Thoughts
Cognitive: BLUE
Still a problem
Cognitive: TLC
Somatic Arousal
Learning to Relax
Still a problem
Quick Calming
Aversive Events
Problem Solving
Still a problem
Activity Selection
Social Skills
Presenting a Positive Self



Module 1: Getting Acquainted



Getting Acquainted

- “Building a Relationship” exercises
- Orientation to Program
  - “Coach” metaphor
  - Practice!
  - Introduction to Fear Thermometer
- Games at the end of the session

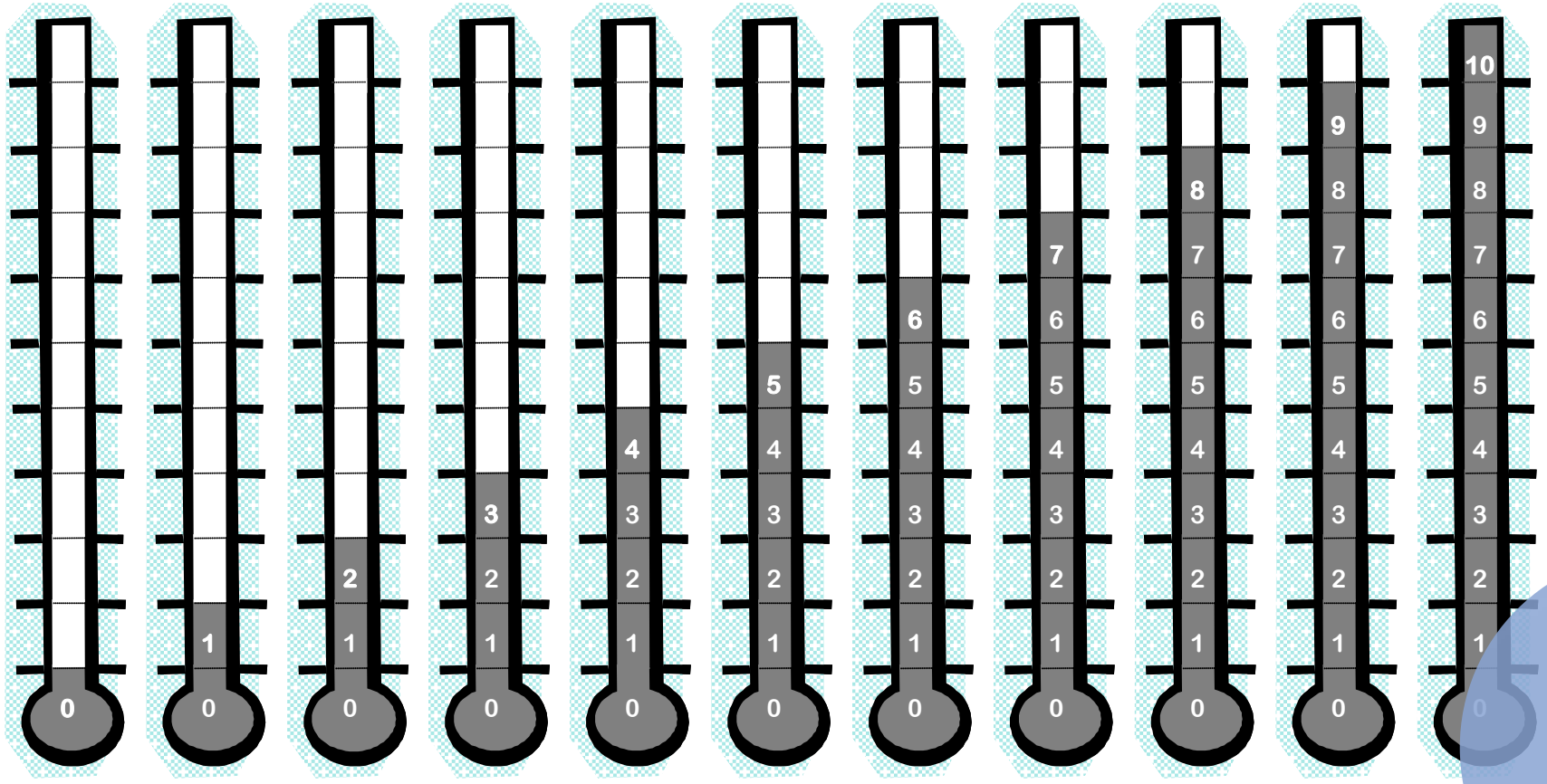
Getting Acquainted: Building a Relationship

- Establish with child that therapy involves information-sharing
- Personal Facts Game
  - Rule: Any question I ask, I also have to answer
  - Remember what child shares for later
  - Ideas for questions?

Getting Acquainted: Orientation to Program

- Therapist as a “coach”
- Importance of active child participation
- Goals of program:
  - Knowing When You’re Anxious
  - Knowing What to Do About It
- Homework assignments and rewards
  - Homework at each session
  - Earn rewards for bringing and completing homework
- Introduce “Fear Thermometer” to child

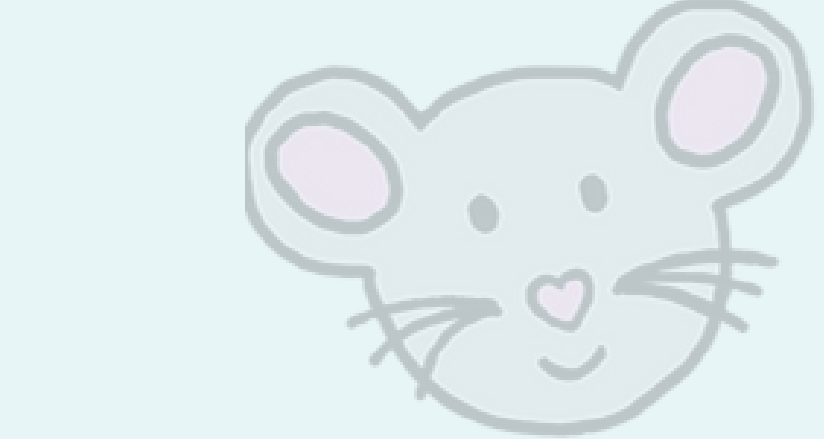
Introduce Fear Thermometer

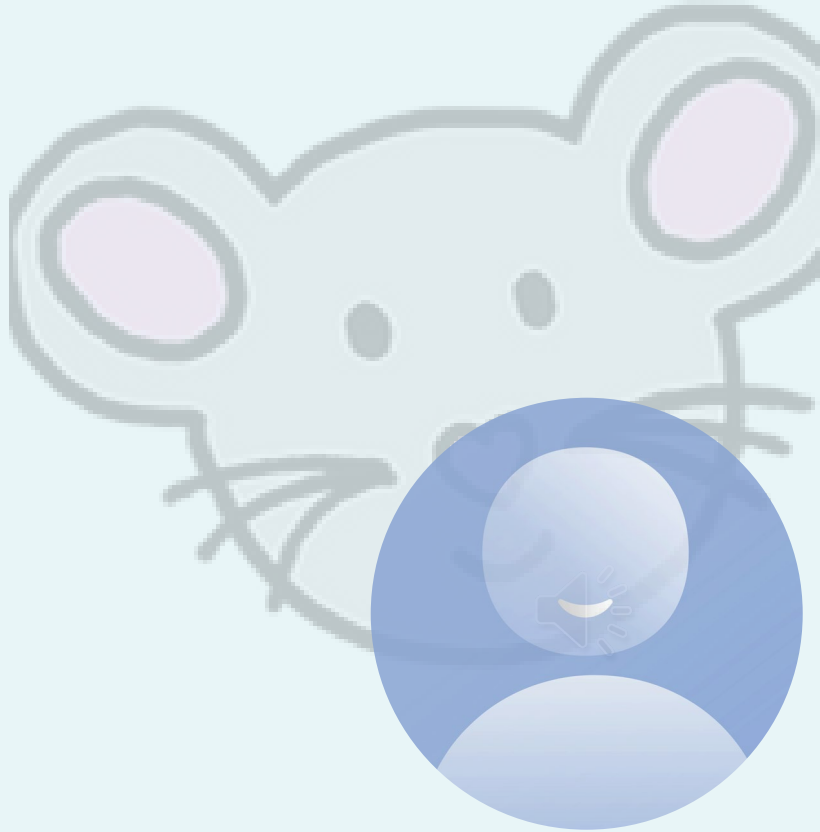


Getting Acquainted: Things to Remember

- Orientation to Program
  - “Coach” metaphor
- Anxious children are often:
  - ANXIOUS
  - Avoidant
  - Fearful or Wary
  - Not used to talking about their thinking
- General rule: Leave ‘em Laughing!
  - We want them to come back!
  - Therapy can be fun, exciting, and empowering

Fear Ladder





Fear Ladder: The Basics

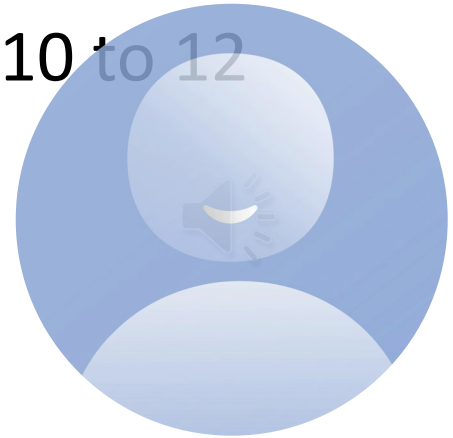
- Identifying and ordering feared stimuli makes planning exposure easier and allows client to see progress
- Use the “Fear Ladder” worksheet
  - Will also need Fear Thermometer and index cards

Building a Fear Ladder-1

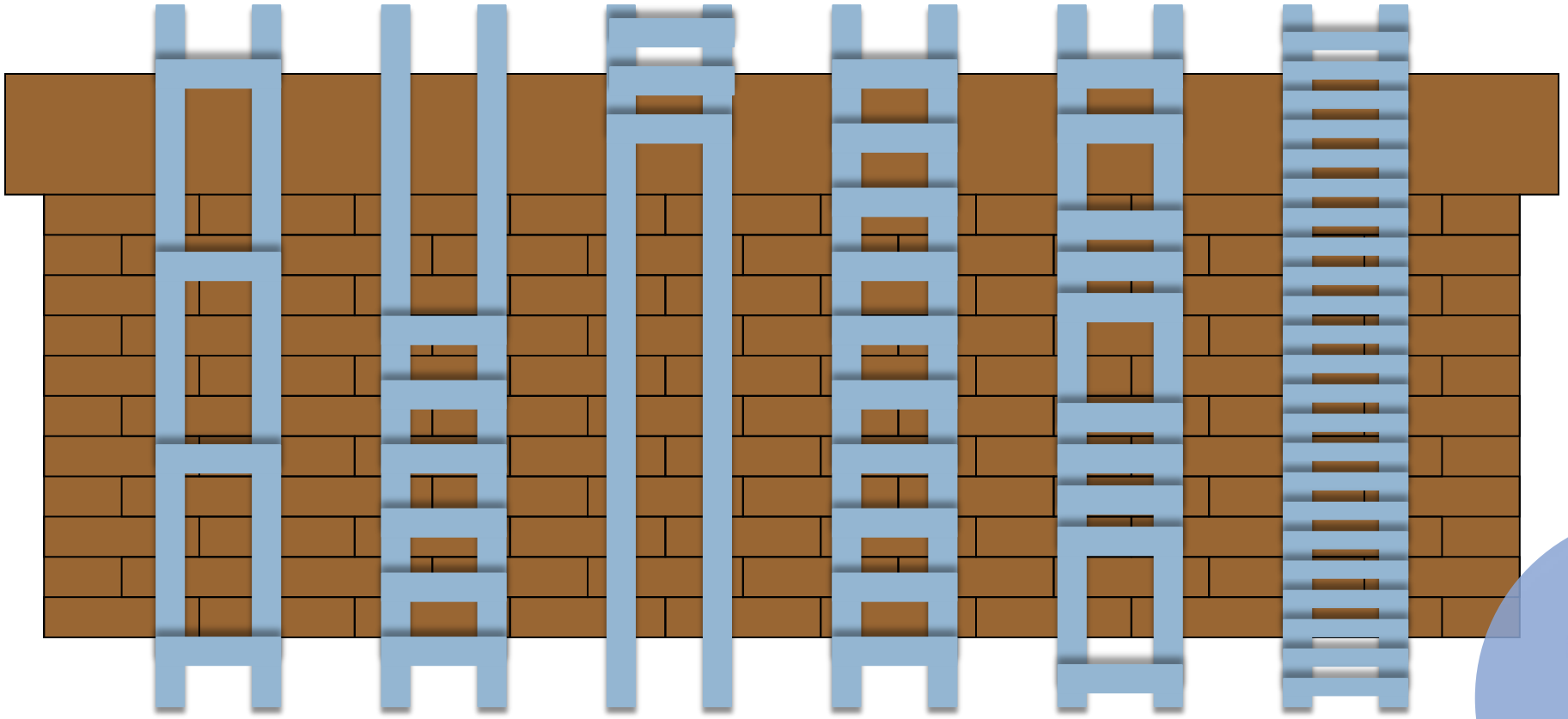
- Create a list of 10 or more feared situations in the primary domain of concern
  - Write each scenario on a separate index card
- Vary the situations across relevant dimensions, such as:
  - Number, gender, age, or familiarity of people present
  - Location
  - Intensity
  - Proximity

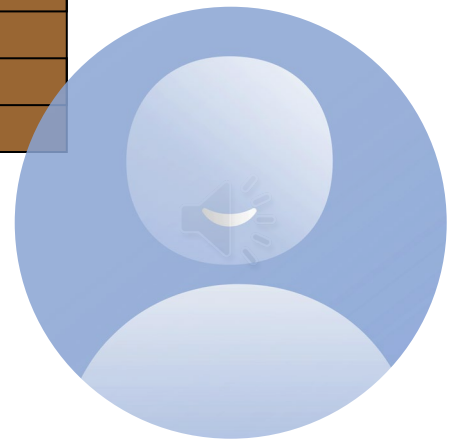
Building a Fear Ladder-2

- Ask child to give each situation a fear rating using the Fear Thermometer
  - Order cards from the least (0) to the most feared (10)
  - Aim to have items in the low, middle, and high ranges
    - Revisit steps to generate new items if missing scale points
- Repeat process with parent(s)
  - Do not share child's rating before getting parent's
- Once both parties have identified and rated scenarios, select 10 to 12 items for final ladder
  - Focus on items that can actually be practiced



Which Ladder Would You Climb?

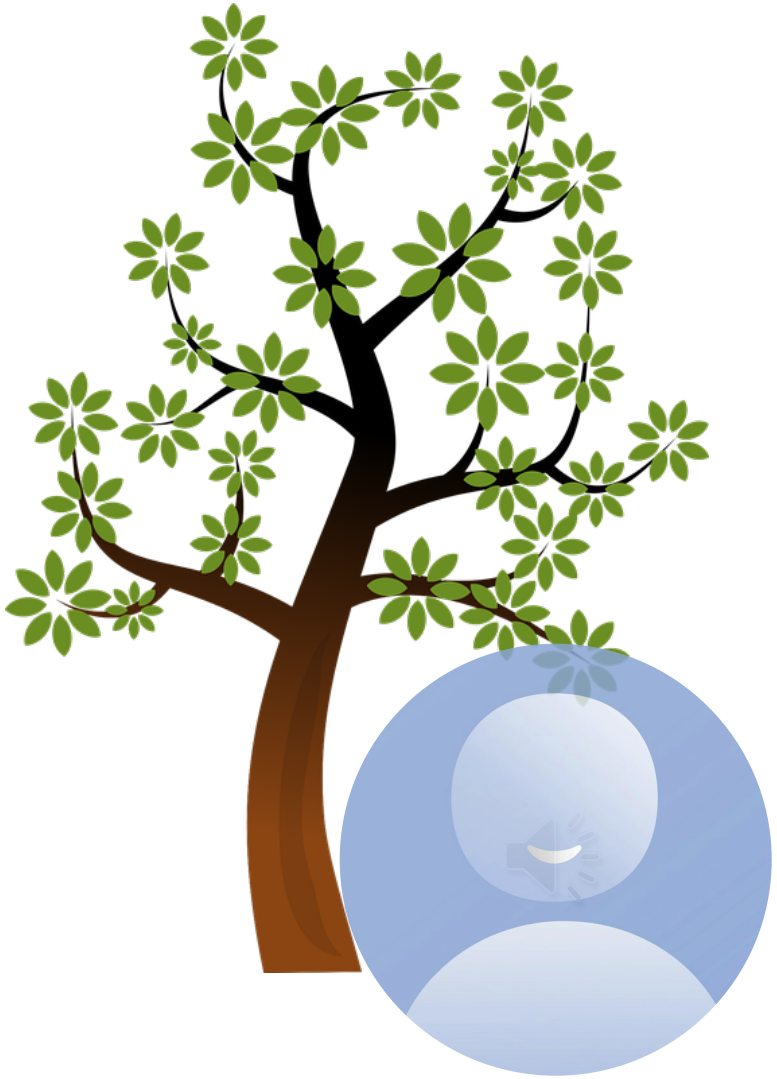




Social Anxiety Variations

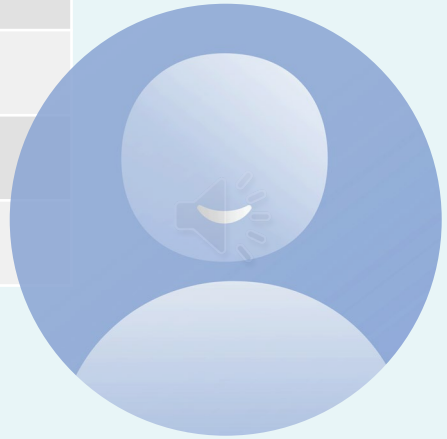
Possible branches might include:

- Age or gender of person you are engaging (adults vs. youths, girls vs. boys)
- Size of group (big vs. small)
- Social setting (school vs. recreation vs. community vs. unfamiliar place)
- Type of interaction (greetings, requests, conversations, placing orders/making purchases)



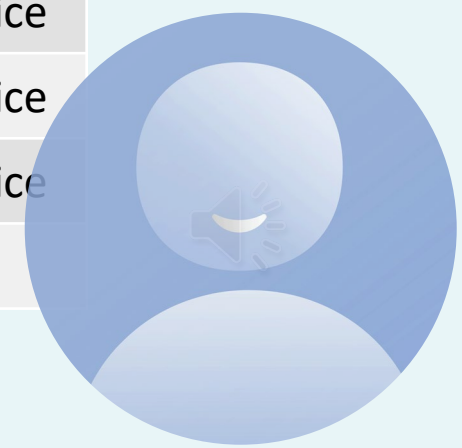
Social Anxiety Example

Rating	Item
10	Organizing game among group of peers on playground
9	Asking unfamiliar peer to play game
8	Asking familiar peer to play game
7	Ordering food from unfamiliar teenager at familiar restaurant
6	Ordering food from familiar teenager at familiar restaurant
5	Approaching unfamiliar adult and asking 3 questions
4	Approaching familiar adult and asking 3 questions
3	Approaching unfamiliar peer and asking 3 questions
2	Approaching familiar peer and asking 3 questions
1	Waving with eye contact at unfamiliar peer



Separation Anxiety Example

Rating	Item
10	Parents late 15 min for school pick-up
9	Parents late 10 min for school pick-up
8	Child waits in one aisle of a store while parent/therapist is in a separate aisle
7	Child waits inside home while parent take outs trash
6	Child stays in a separate room from parent at home for 5 min
5	Scavenger hunt in the clinic
4	Sits in therapy room alone for 5 min with therapist outside of office
3	Sits in therapy room alone for 3 min with therapist outside of office
2	Sits in therapy room alone for 1 min with therapist outside of office
1	Imagines being alone in therapy room

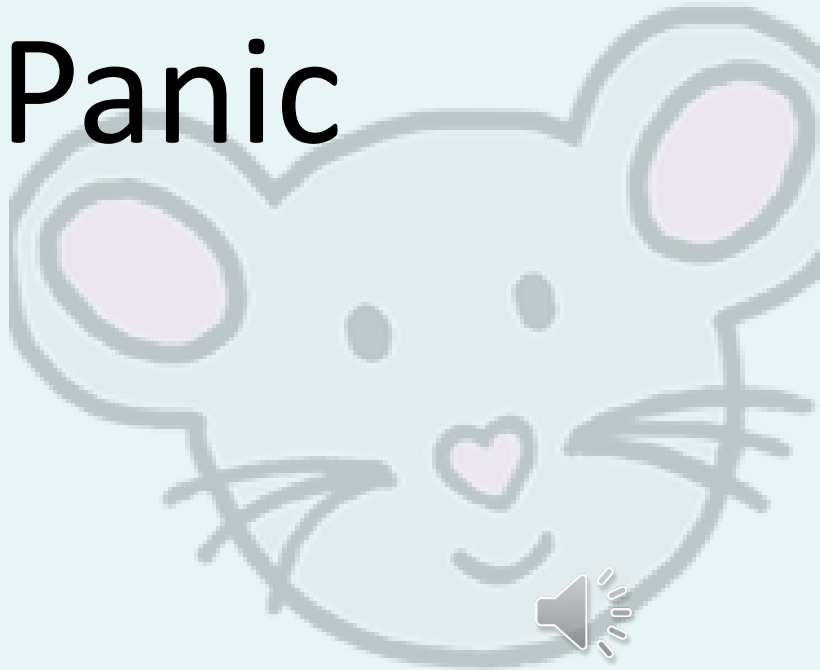


Special Cases

- Trauma
  - Fear ladder used to help guide the creation of the trauma narrative
- Panic disorder
  - Fear ladder includes interoceptive exposure
- OCD
  - Fear ladder includes focus on ratings without the compulsions
- GAD
  - Exposure to worry itself
  - Helping child to gain control over worry cycle

Special Cases: OCD and Panic Disorder

How to Adapt MATCH



How to Adapt MATCH to OCD

- Same basic format as any other anxiety
  - In addition to learning about fears, will need to gather information about behaviors that are used to neutralize anxiety
    - E.g., compulsively washing hands after touching any foreign object
  - Practices on fear ladder will involve exposure plus inhibiting the neutralizing rituals

How to Adapt MATCH to Panic Disorder

- With panic, the feared stimuli are the child's own harmless bodily sensations
  - May be difficult for the child to separate each of those sensations in order to create a fear ladder
- Use an interoceptive assessment to isolate each of the bodily feelings and rate them on the fear thermometer
- Now you have a fear ladder and can practice

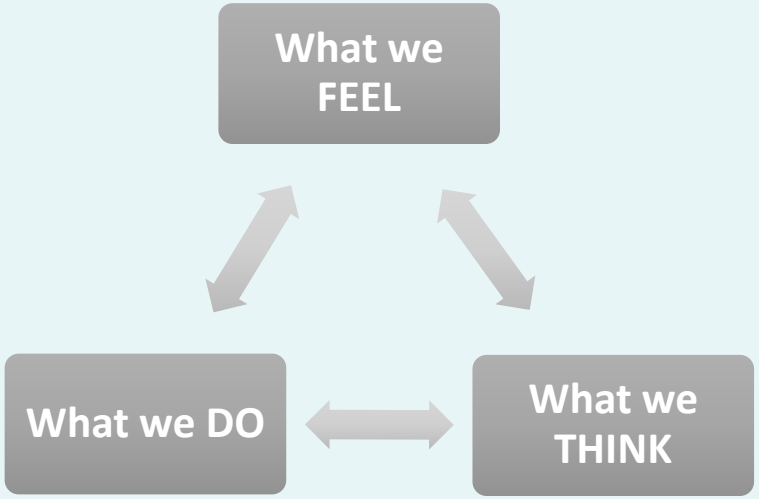
Interoceptive Assessment *("Learning Your Anxious Feelings")*

	How Strong?	How Anxious?	How Similar?
Move your head side to side (30 seconds)			
Hold your head low b/w your legs (30 seconds), then lift quickly			
Run in place (1 minute)			
Hold your breath (45 seconds)			
Tense all your muscles or hold push-up position (1 minute)			
Spin in a swivel chair (1 minute)			
Hyperventilate (1 minute)			
Breathe slowly through a small straw or as slowly as possible (2 minutes)			

Module 3: Learning About Anxiety (Child)

Learning About Anxiety (Child)

- There are 3 parts to anxiety:
  - What we FEEL!
  - What we THINK!
  - What we DO!
- Anxiety is normal and can be helpful!
  - A built-in alarm
  - Helps motivate us to do something
  - Sometimes, there is real danger!
- “Anxious Thoughts and Feelings” worksheet
- “Learning About Anxiety” worksheets



Distinguishing Between Anticipatory and Acute Alarms

- Yellow light
  - Something bad might happen
  - Worry; obsessional thoughts
- Red light
  - Something bad is happening RIGHT NOW!!!
  - Panic symptoms, PTSD re-experiencing, mind going “blank,” etc.

YELLOW LIGHT
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
"Something bad MIGHT happen."

RED LIGHT
"Something bad is happening
RIGHT NOW!"

False Alarm Detection

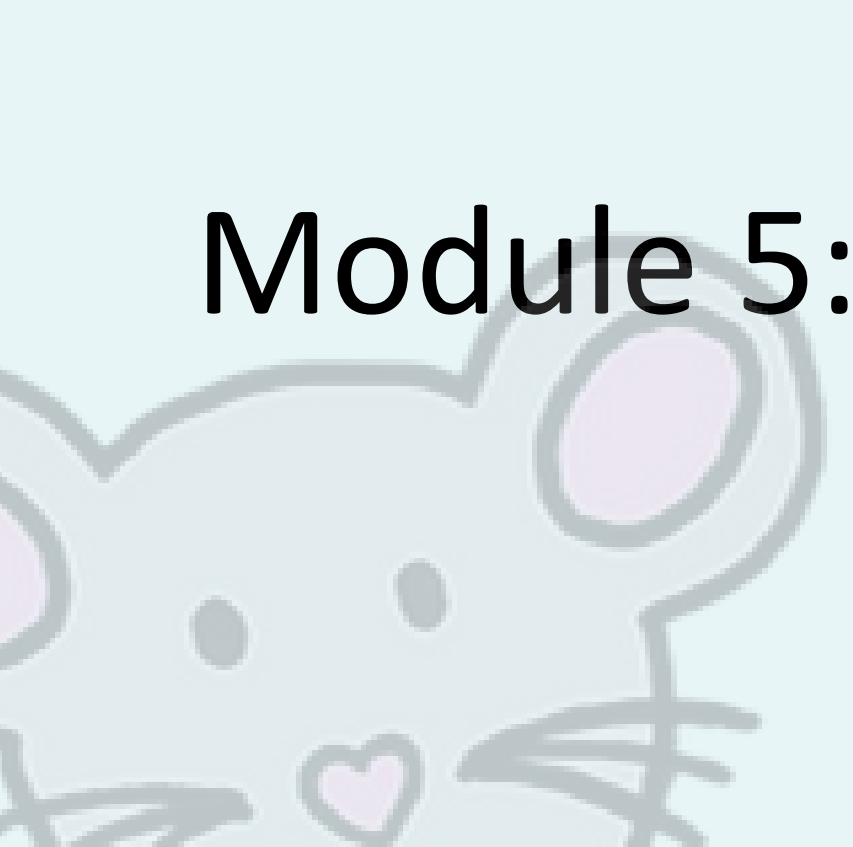
- How to identify a “false” alarm?
  - False alarms → scary, but not dangerous
  - False alarms can get in our way
- Sometimes, our alarms are too sensitive and go off when there is no real danger
  - Can modify slightly for Panic, OCD, PTSD
- In session, we will work to help you learn the difference
  - By looking for clues
  - Testing out situations
  - Practicing, small steps
  - “We can go slow, but we will always be moving forward.”

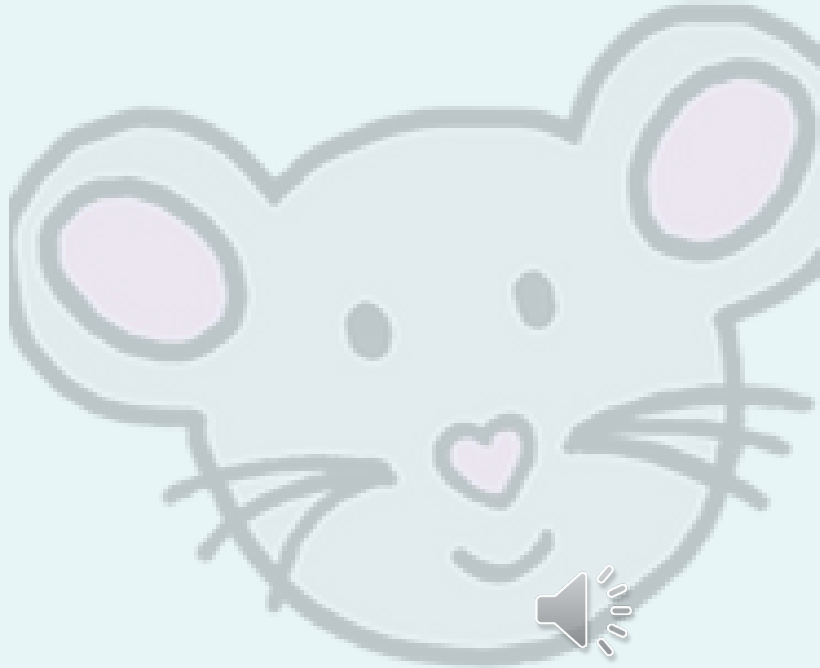
Module 4: Learning About Anxiety (Parent)

Learning About Anxiety (Parent)

- Nature of anxiety in children
- What works/what doesn't
  - Talking doesn't help much
  - Practicing to face anxiety provoking situations and handling them helps
- Coach roles
  - Therapist → "session coach"
  - Caregiver → "home coach"
- Alarms and False Alarms
- Principles of Success
- "Parent Interview" (if necessary)
- "Understanding Anxiety" (parent handout)
- "Helping Your Child Succeed" (parent handout)

Module 5: Practicing





Basic Behavioral Exposure Practicing

- What works/what doesn't
  - Talking doesn't help much
- Introduction
  - Introduce child to feared stimuli in a graded fashion
- Move slowly
  - From less → more threatening stimuli, following habituation
- Repetition
  - Repeat the same exposure until child is desensitized
- Allows for threat reappraisal

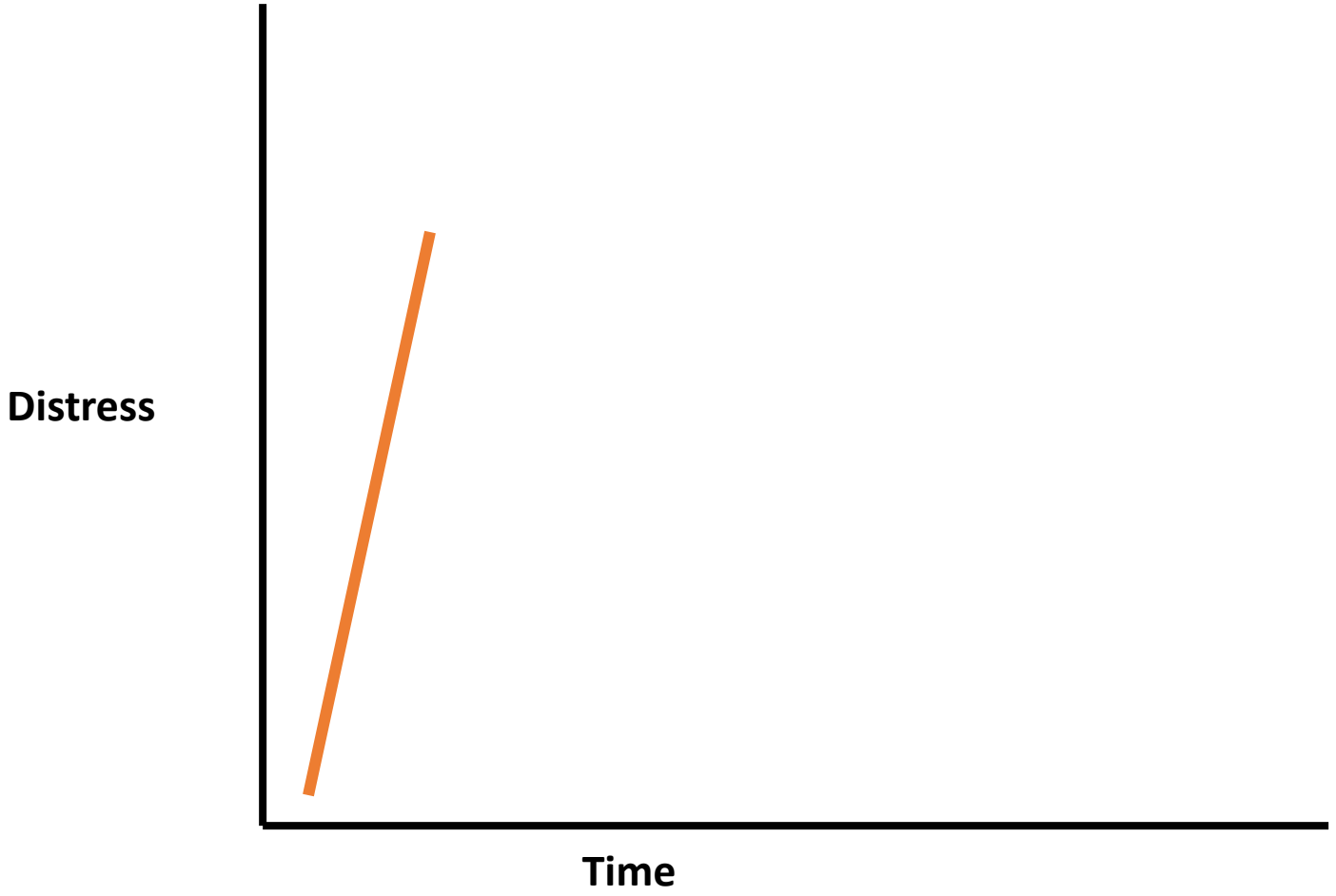
Top 10 Reasons Therapists Don’t Do Exposure

- It’s going to hurt the child
- You can’t do exposure on my client’s kind of worries/fears
- It’s uncomfortable
- It’s too hard and complicated
- It didn’t work before
- We don’t have the right tools/settings
- Time consuming
- The child doesn’t want to do this
- I can’t make the child do what I say
- It seems too simple

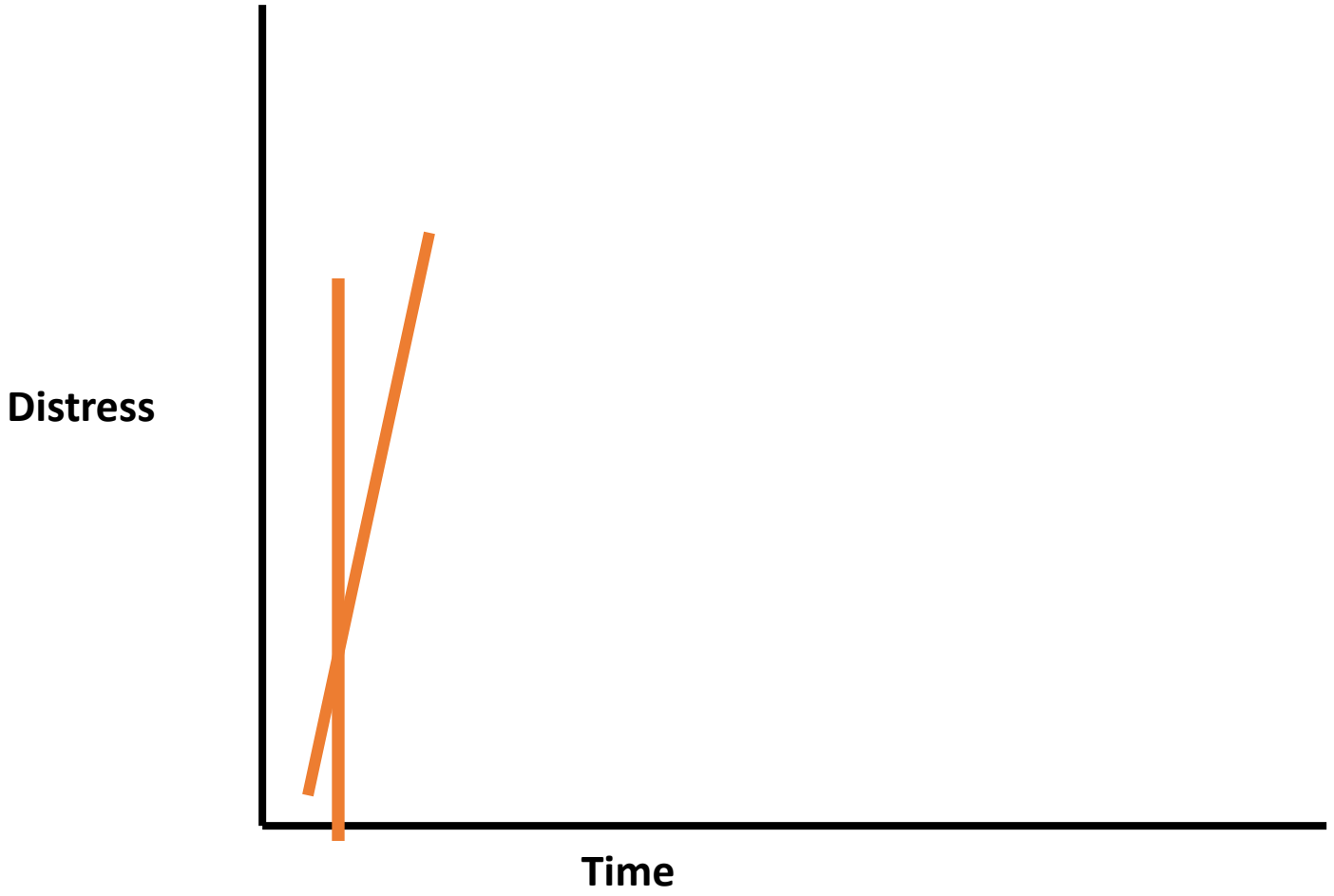
What Happens with Repeated Confrontation of the Feared Stimuli?

- Anxiety initially increases
- Anxiety naturally decreases over time
- Individual learns that the situation/memory is not dangerous
- Individual learns that the distressing feelings (emotional and physiological) decrease
- Individual learns that they can handle the fear/anxiety and feel more in control
- If the individual repeatedly confronts anxiety-producing situations, the distress gradually decreases and they can become relatively comfortable in that situation.

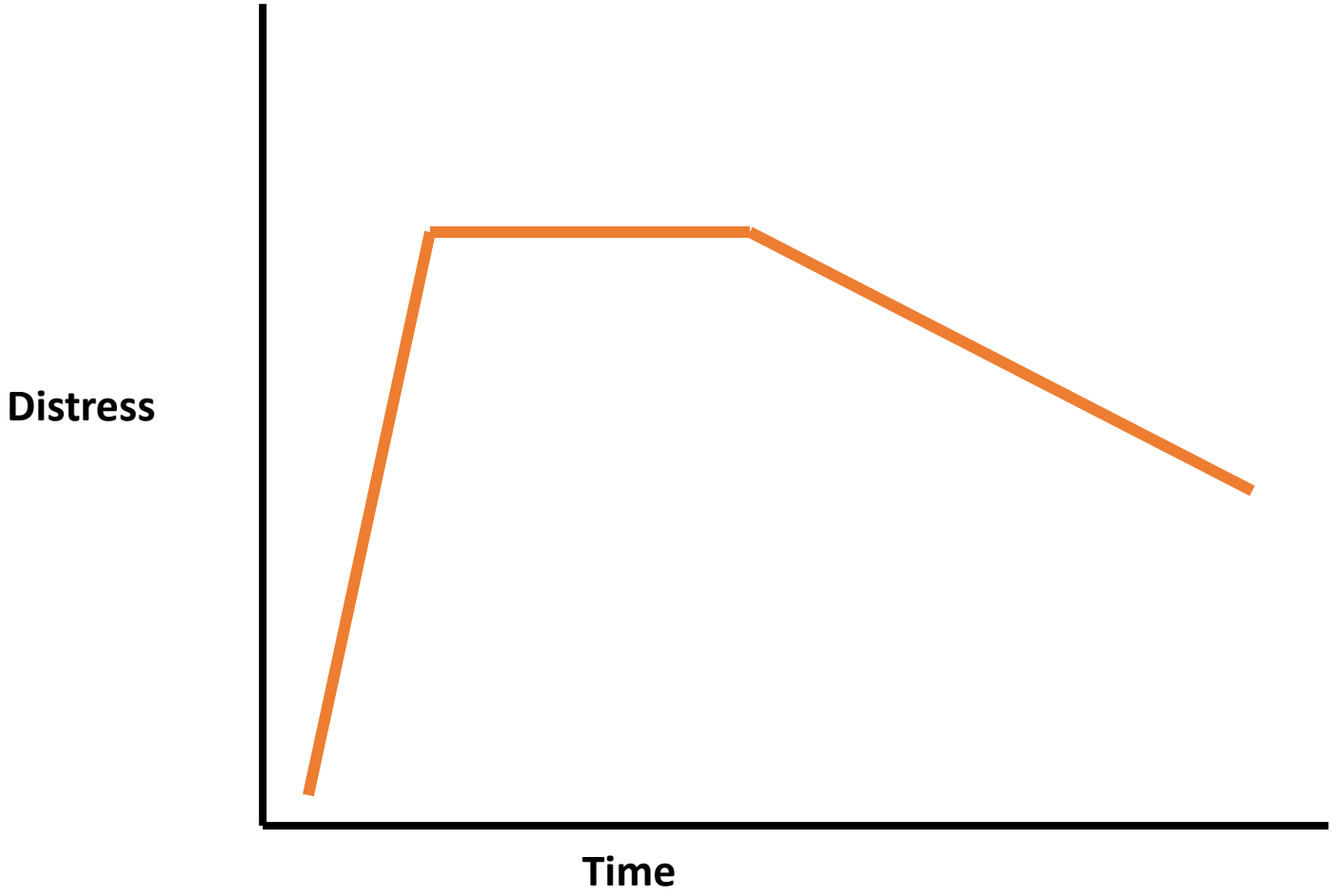
Fear Activation



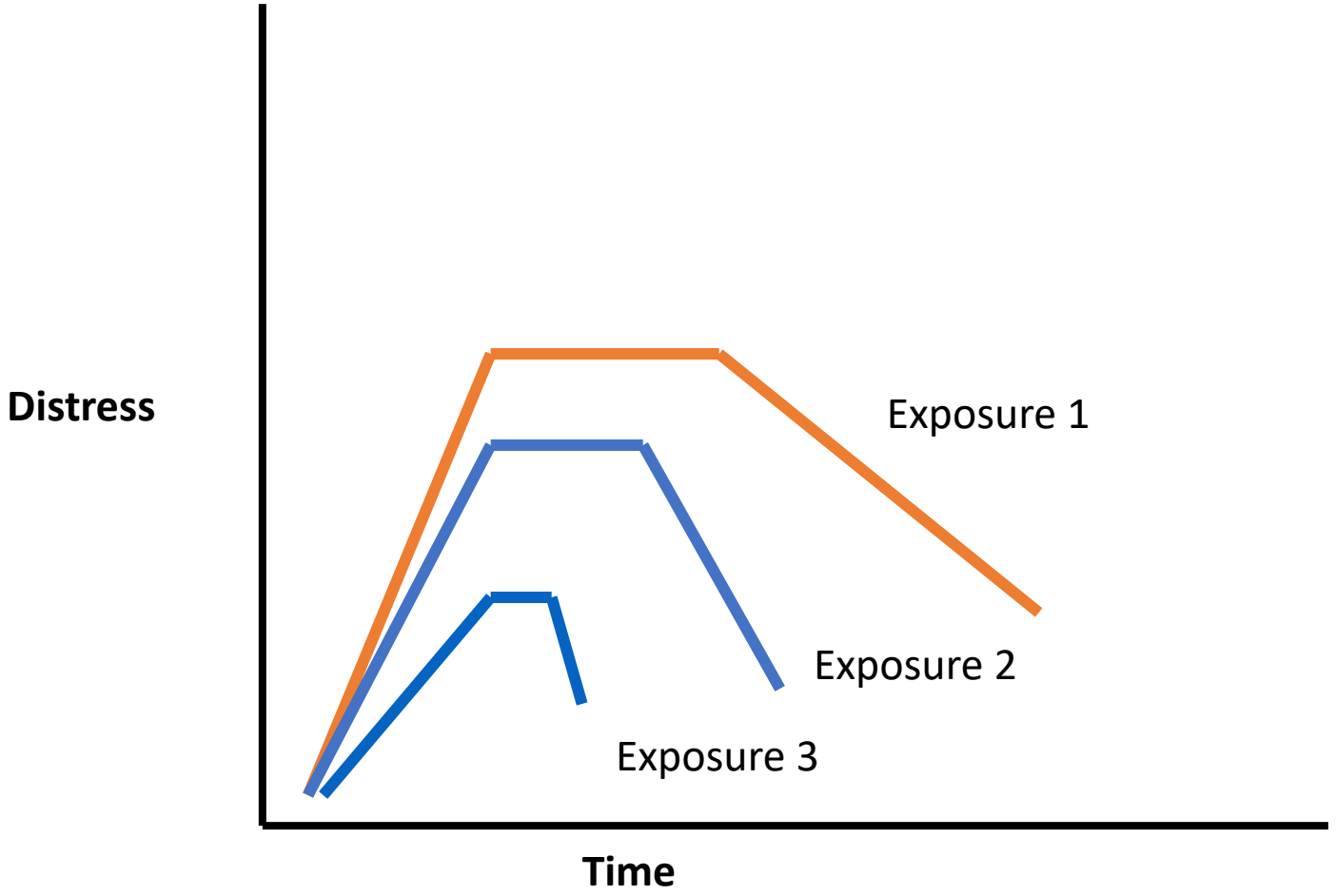
Avoidance



Rationale for Exposure



Rationale for Exposure



Practicing: Guidelines

- Set the occasion for success
- Adequate preparation with child
- Situation must be anxiety provoking
- Take ratings
- Pay attention to behavior cues
- Habituation
- Debrief

Practicing: What it Looks Like in Session

- Start low and go slow!
- Therapist exudes confidence in child
  - Reminds child of previous successes
- Talk about it
- Do it
- Talk about it
- Do it some more!

Two Practice Types

- “Before-and-After Practice Record”: discrete trials of behaviors (e.g., asking someone a question)
  - Rate fear before and after each trial
- “Start-and-Stop Practice Record”: Extended or continuous behaviors (e.g., standing in a dark room, touching a feared object, giving a speech)
  - Rate fear when you start, and then at one minute intervals during the exercise

About Habituation

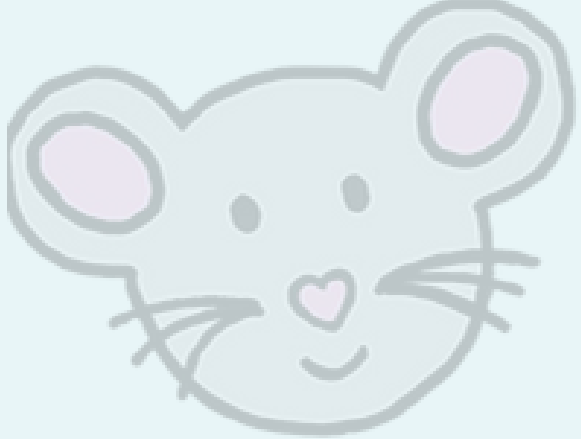
- Two varieties:
  - Within practice habituation
    - Anxiety ratings drop down during each exposure (or set of trials)
  - Between practice habituation
    - Anxiety ratings at the start are lower across trials (i.e., across time)
- Both are your goal!

Practicing: Common Pitfalls

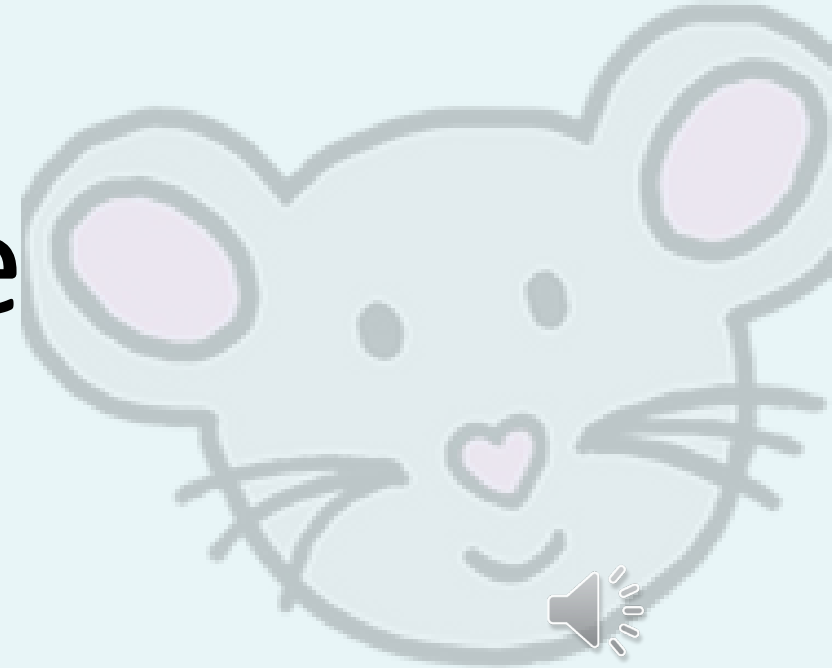
- Ending too soon
  - Letting kid bargain or cry to get out
  - Therapist gets scared/uncomfortable
- Going too fast
- Talking to kid
- Allowing distraction
- Too intense
- Inappropriate target

Practicing: Stepping Back Without Backing Down

- What to do if exposure begins, child is very upset, and you decide exposure was too intense
  - Comment on observed difficulty to child
  - Two choices:
    - Take a break and resume and use coping skills
    - Choose a less difficult but related exposure
    - But do something!
  - Re-engage in revised exposure
  - Praise effort



Module 6: Maintenance



Maintenance

- Accessing the guides
  - Interactive version
- Introduce Maintenance
  - “Maintaining Success” parent handout
  - “What’s New?” child worksheet
- Review importance of continued practice
- Quiz child on new application of skills
- Predict challenges for child
  - Difference between anxiety set-back and anxiety relapse
  - How to apply what the child has already learned
- Review progress (“What’s New?” worksheet)
- Start planning last sessions (Wrap-Up) and final session

Final Exercises

- Child and parent as therapist
- Present a problem that is likely to come up
- Ask them to design Fear Ladder and Practice

Difference Between Set-Back and Relapse

- This is not an “Anxiety Removal Program”
- Remember that anxiety is normal
  - Anxious kids are more likely to develop anxiety when under stress
  - Biological predispositions should be considered
- Consider times when anxiety is appropriate and likely for child
  - During transitions, life-stressors, etc.
- Managing anxiety is the goal
  - For lapses, use skills learned in treatment, monitor anxiety
    - If no improvement, may be a relapse, contact therapist

Module 7: Wrap-Up

Wrap-Up

- Discuss child's feelings about termination
- Review main points of treatment and how they apply to child's life
- Emphasize continuing to practice skills
- Predict challenges and plan solutions
- The Commercial!
- The Celebration!

Next Up!

- Depression Focus