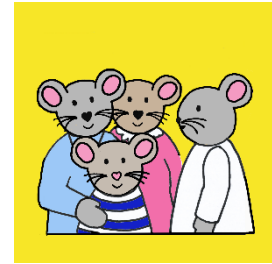


# Practising

**Use This:**  
To reduce anxious responding to feared situations or items through gradual exposure.



## Goals

- The child will practise exposure to feared items or situations
- Over the course of several attempts, the child will show decreased ratings for these items or situations
- The child will understand the relationship between the practice performed and the decreased anxiety

## Materials

- **Fear Thermometer** and **Fear Ladder** (2 unrated copies, for anxiety/trauma), **Feelings Thermometer** (for depression) (pp. 305, 307, 329)
- **Practice Record** (Start-and-Stop or Before-and-After) (pp. 311-312)
- **Practising** parent handout (p. 313)
- **Weekly questionnaires** and **Monitoring sheet** (see pages 268 – 285)
- **Therapist Note Taking Sheet** (p. 267)

*⚡ If time is tight: Have the child practise on anxiety-provoking situation, successfully handle the anxiety produced by that situation, and experience a reduction in fear.*

## Main steps

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Set an Agenda</b>         | Remember to start by setting an agenda together and by reviewing any practice assignments.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Obtain Weekly Ratings</b> | If the main focus is traumatic stress or anxiety, use the 0 to 10 scale of the <b>Fear Thermometer</b> to obtain <b>Fear Ladder</b> ratings from both the child and his or her parent. If the main focus is depressed mood, use the <b>Feelings Thermometer</b> to take a rating. Review the <b>Weekly questionnaires</b> and <b>Monitoring sheet</b> in detail. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Introduce Practising</b>  | If this is the first time starting exposure practice, review with the family that this phase of treatment will involve practising in order to build new skills for coping with anxiety. If you have covered the Learning about Anxiety Module with the family, you can tie in concepts already covered.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Select an Item</b>        | Assist the child in choosing a situation from his or her <b>Fear Ladder</b> , easy ones at first, harder ones later. If the child has no <b>Fear Ladder</b> (i.e., anxiety is not the main target), pick the feared situation you currently wish to address.   |

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| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Define Goals</b>  | <p>Ask the child to visualise the situation and define overt behavioural goals for that situation (e.g., starting a conversation, being separated from his or her mother). If necessary, discuss and modify the goal so that it is not so hard that the child will refuse. Remember that small steps are OK, and "not being anxious" is not allowed to be a goal.</p>  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>ACTIVITY</b><br><i>Let's Practise</i>                               | <p>To the extent possible, practise the exposure together. If the exposure will involve discrete trials of behaviours such as holding one's breath or asking someone a question, it is best to use the <b>Before-and-After Practice Record</b>. For extended or continuous behaviours, such as standing in a dark room, giving a speech, or touching a feared object, it is best to use the <b>Start-and-Stop Practice Record</b>. Date the <b>Practice Record</b>, and write the name of the practice item in the leftmost empty space. During discrete exposure practices, take fear ratings only before and after each trial. During continuous exposure practices, take a rating when you start, then take additional fear ratings at about one minute intervals during the exercise (intervals can be longer if the exposure might run longer than 10 minutes), and take a final rating as you stop. Repeat the exposure until the fear rating is a 3 or less for items starting at a 5 or above, 2 or less for items starting at 4 or below, or until 30 minutes has elapsed. When finished, draw one line to connect the values within each trial and another line to connect the "before" or "start" values across trials.</p> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Review the Practice</b>   | <p>Praise the child for his or her hard work. If fear ratings decreased during the practice, ask the child what happened to his or her anxiety. Ask if the feared consequences occurred or if anything bad happened. Use the <b>Practice Record</b> to demonstrate that anxiety did indeed go down over time.</p>  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Praise Even if Ratings Did Not Decrease</b>                         | <p>If the fear did not decrease, point out that the child endured the anxiety without quitting and that the feared consequences did not occur.</p>   |
| <b>Example script</b>   |  |
| <i>Well done! And did anything really terrible happen to you? Well done for being so brave!</i> |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Repeat Practise</b>   | <p>If there is time, repeat the practice exercise again after a short break. Ask the child if he or she noticed whether the practice gets easier with repetition.</p>  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Show off Success</b>  | <p>When the child has completed a practice exercise or activity successfully, this is a good time to repeat it with a parent there to see. During the practice, you can model to the parent how to encourage and praise the child's behaviours.</p>  |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>PRACTICE ASSIGNMENT</b><br><i>Practise at Home</i> | <p>If the child has never practised at home before, explain the <b>Practice Record</b> and its use. Assign exposure practice to be completed during the week by filling out a new <b>Practice Record</b>. Typically, the child should be asked to practise on at least 4 different days that week. On the <b>Practice Record</b>, write the items selected and the appropriate instructions (e.g., stop when ratings come down to a ...). Remind the child that filling out the <b>Practice Record</b> is just like gathering clues – the ratings will help us learn what's happening. If the <b>Practice Record</b> is too difficult for the child to use, have a parent assist. It may be necessary to give the parent a demonstration of how to use the form by doing a "mini-practice" together.</p> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Review Parent Handout</b>                          | <p>Tell the parent/s to review the <b>Practising</b> handout after the session. Make sure the parent is familiar with the concepts so that he or she can assist the child at home if needed.</p>   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Send the materials for the next session</b>        | <p>Tell the parent/s you will send a written summary and the materials for the next session. Remind them that they <u>do not</u> need to be completed for next session as you will go through them together in the session. Tell the parent/s you will also send the <b>Weekly questionnaires</b> and <b>Monitoring sheet</b> which need to be completed for the next session.</p>   |
| <p>Confirm date and time of the next call.</p>                                 |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Summarising</b>                                    | <p>Ask if they would like you to summarise the session, if they want to summarise or if you should do it together.</p>   |

### Leave 'Em Laughing

End the session on a positive note with the family by perhaps talking about things that are unrelated to treatment or a game or activity that will leave them feeling good about the work you've done today. The end of each session should be used to praise the family's efforts and to convey support and encouragement.

### Helpful Tips

- Practice should progress from easy items to more challenging items across sessions.
- If ratings do not come down within practice trials, the practice trials may need to be longer.
- If ratings come down within practice trials but not between practice trials, the practice trials may be too far apart. Consider making them more frequent.
- You can add new items to the **Fear Ladder** if they arise.
- If a practice is too unusual or difficult, one option is to role-play or act it out first.
- If the exposure is being conducted with a child who has already received sessions with cognitive techniques (e.g., STOP), then you should have the child precede each practice exercise by stating first their anxious thoughts and then coming up with other coping thoughts. Following the practice, review with the child which

thoughts came true, the anxious thoughts or the coping thoughts (“So which thing came true?”).

## Special Cases

|                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <i>Panic</i>                      | You will be using the <b><i>Fear Ladder</i></b> you created from information gathered in the interoceptive assessment. Remind the child that the goal of practising these feelings is to learn the difference between a real and a false alarm, and to get used to the feelings so that they no longer provoke panic attacks. When starting the practice, ask the child to focus on his or her physical sensations and to give a cue (e.g., raise a hand) when they notice the feared feelings. Start taking ratings at that point, and remind the child to focus on the fear and not to distract themselves. Continue each exercise for at least 30 seconds once the sensation is noticed. After the practice, it can be helpful to ask the child to also give a rating of how strong the feelings were (not just an anxiety rating). Point out that the feelings may not become less strong, but the anxiety about them should decrease over time. |
| <i>Obsessions and Compulsions</i> | For a child with OCD, be sure to explain the importance of refraining from special behaviours or rituals used to “turn off the alarm” (compulsions). Some compulsions may be hard to detect, such as the child looking at something, mental counting, etc. You can check on this by asking the child periodically about whether he or she has urges to perform the ritual and to rate the urge. The urge to perform the ritual often decreases as time elapses following the exposure. Once the urge and the fear have subsided, it may be appropriate to allow some form of the ritualised behaviour (for example, allowing a child to briefly wash hands when the exposures have involved touching something truly dirty).   |
| <i>Posttraumatic Stress</i>       | For children with posttraumatic stress, you should have first completed the trauma narrative. If the child has a remaining list of “trauma reminders” (situations, people, or places that have become linked to the traumatic memories) on the <b><i>Fear Ladder</i></b> you can practise those together with this module. Be sure that the content of the <b><i>Fear Ladder</i></b> is innocuous (based on false alarms) and does not actually present any danger to the child.   |
| <i>Epilepsy</i>                   | Be sure that the content of the <b><i>Fear Ladder</i></b> is innocuous and does not present any danger.  |

## How’s Your Style?

- Did you praise often?
- Did you review often, by asking questions?
- Did you simplify the steps as needed?
- Did your pace match that of the child or family?
- Did you stay on track?