

1919 University Avenue West, Suite 400, St. Paul, MN 55104 Tel. 651-645-2948 or 888-NAMIHELPS www.namihelps.org

The practice of exposure may be used if a child has anxiety. This practice teaches children how to manage his or her fears and worries. This is done by exposing him or her to situations that make him or her anxious. Practicing exposure helps children cope with situations instead of trying to avoid them.

How does this practice work?

- Identify one fearful situation a child experiences.
- Approach the scary situation in small, incremental steps.
- Teach the child skills to cope with each small step. These steps might involve a real or imaginary experience.
- Identify what fearful situation causes the anxious feelings.
- Expose the child to one of his or her fearful situations, having the therapist monitor how he or she is doing.
- Learn that the fear will pass. A child will know that whatever it is he or she is afraid of won't really hurt him or her.
- Practice these steps over and over until a child overcomes his or her fears.

Example:

Sally is afraid of dogs

Step 1- Show Sally pictures of dogs.

This step will be done over and over until she does not feel afraid when she looks at pictures of dogs.

Step 2- Sally and a dog are placed in the same room.

This step will be done over and over until Sally does not feel afraid being in the same area/room as the dog.

Step 3- Sally will pet the dog.

This step will be done over and over until she does not feel afraid when she pets the dog.

Step 4- Sally will practice steps 1-3 until she is no longer afraid of dogs.