

Agoraphobia Exposure

[Blog](#)

[Forum](#)

[Reader's Questions](#)

[Guest Post](#)

[Coaching](#)

[Subscribers](#)

BLOG POST ARCHIVE

VOLUME

4

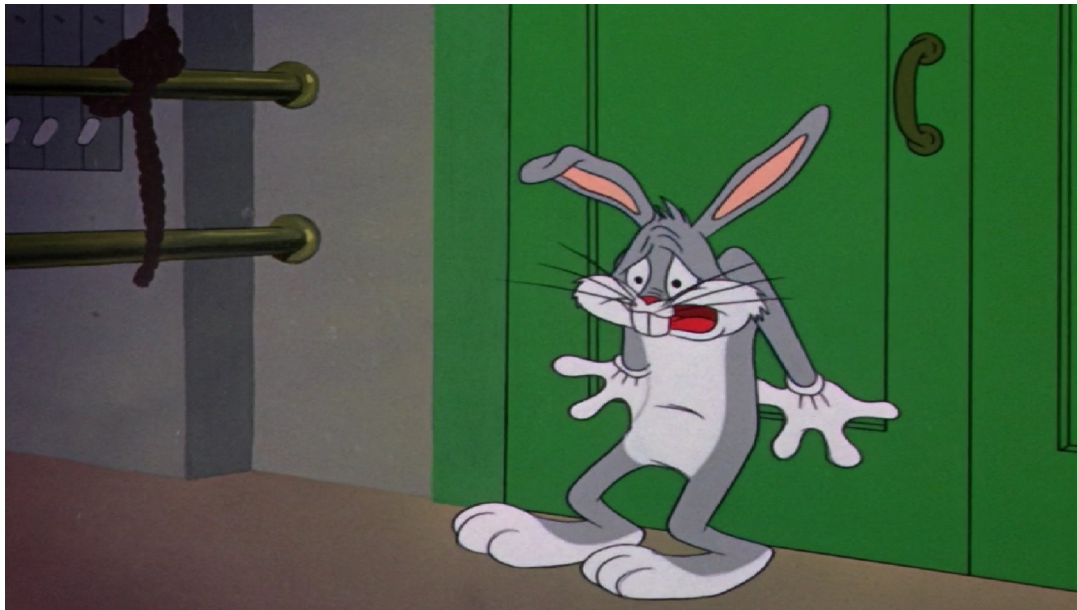
CONTENTS

Click on a post title to jump to it

- * [**Reader's Question : How Do I Get Rid Of The Fear Of Panicking?**](#)
- * [**Do Exposures With Consistency**](#)
- * [**Welcome To The Discomfort Zone**](#)
- * [**What's It Like To Have A Panic Attack And Not Care?**](#)
- * [**Don't Let Reinforcement Turn Into Complacency**](#)
- * [**Using Affirmations To Enhance Your Exposures**](#)
- * [**You've Arrived At Your Destination. Now What?**](#)
- * [**Don't Resist, Don't Turn Back, Don't Run Away**](#)
- * [**Anxiety Is Exciting**](#)
- * [**Overcoming Agoraphobia Will Make You A Better Person**](#)

Reader's Question :

How Do I Get Rid Of The Fear Of Panicking?



Q : I think I finally realized something. When I go to public places and start having symptoms such as shaking, dizziness, fast heartbeat, they aren't actually panic attacks (yet), they are just me being afraid of having one!

And when this fear goes too far it actually turns into a panic attack because I get startled by those physical symptoms that the fear causes in me, and THAT acts as a trigger to start the panic attack itself.

But this is where the problem begins. How do I stop BEING AFRAID of them? I already know nothing bad will happen if and when I have one. I will just feel really bad for some time and that's it. But why do I still keep being afraid of them?

I really see and actually understand crystal clear what this is all about, in my case at least. Now I just need to find the way to actually stop THE FEAR, not the attacks. So any tips are welcome!

A : You're very scared that you might panic when out in public. However, you're not too concerned with eradicating that risk, because you know, acknowledge and accept that having a panic attack is a possibility.

What bothers you is that you get so afraid that you start to feel the symptoms. And then you wind up panicking because of those distressing symptoms and the fear that brought them on.

You want to know how to stop being afraid of panicking. Well, they call it agoraphobia, meaning an irrational fear of public places. But is it really an irrational fear? On the one hand, yes, and on the other hand, no. It depends what you're referring to.

Being scared of public places is certainly irrational. But being scared of how you'll feel, if that feeling is likely to be really bad? I don't think that's irrational. In fact, I dare anyone to not get scared of those horrible sensations.

The difference between you and someone without agoraphobia is that you've experienced those sensations, and you're very justifiably wary of having them again. Anyone would be.

The way to stop being afraid of panicking is to experience anxiety often. The good news is that you don't need to do this on a large scale. You can put yourself through the experience in small doses. But you need to do it over and over.

As you do this, you'll get better at handling that fear and the accompanying symptoms. If you're repeatedly getting into situations where you get so scared that it's a big problem, perhaps you're getting a bit ahead of yourself. Scale it back a bit.

Do your exposures in a controlled manner. Increase the difficulty bit by bit. Repeat previously successful journeys a couple of times to reinforce your confidence and morale. Take it easy and you'll see that you can handle anything you want, as long as you do it in stages.

There's no way around it. You have to do what scares you. You can't get around the fear, you have to go right through it. But again, the good news is that you can ease your way through this process.

There's no need to challenge yourself so much that it causes you to freeze. There is a way through the fear, and it's up to you to gently find your own pace. Stay consistent, take it easy, and you'll naturally find your own path through the fear.

[Previous post](#)

[Back to contents](#)

[Next post](#)

Do Exposures With Consistency



The main point to remember about exposure is that it's about retraining your brain. It's about demonstrating to it that wherever you are, and whatever you're doing, there is no danger.

It would be nice if all you had to do was 2 or 3 exposures, and that's it. All done. But unfortunately it doesn't work like that. Repetition is what's needed if you want to see changes in how you respond to your environment and circumstances.

Eradicating agoraphobia is like cleaning dirt. You have to roll up your sleeves and keep scrubbing away at it until it all comes off. And if you get complacent and abandon it before it's fully dealt with, it can return.

Is it necessary to do exposures every day? Well, the more the merrier, but once a day isn't necessary. I used to do them every day for a long time but then I reduced it to 4 or 5 times a week.

As long as you're doing them often enough to stay in the game, you're doing alright. Once a month isn't enough to make much impact. At least once a week should be good, preferably more if you can.

A major benefit of doing exposures often and consistently is that you'll have results that you can easily measure and quantify. In other words, you can accurately judge how well you're doing.

This will also increase your morale when you make good progress, and in times when you're not doing so well, you'll be able to make adjustments. Whereas if you don't do them

that often, and you don't do so well, you won't quite know if it's because the challenge was too hard or because you're out of practice.

There's no need to always make huge increases in the difficulty level of your exposures. The most important thing is to stay consistent, and accustomed to going out and facing your fears. Trust your judgment and do what feels appropriate at any given time. You'll instinctively know when to do harder exposures.

I can't tell you how long it will take you to beat agoraphobia, but what I can tell you is that if you want to see solid results, you have to just keep doing exposures often.

You'll eventually get there, but first you must get on the road to your destination, both figuratively and literally. And stay on it until you can see your anxiety free life on the horizon. Then you can finish the job with confidence.

[Previous post](#)

[Back to contents](#)

[Next post](#)

Welcome To The Discomfort Zone



Usually people deal with agoraphobia by trying to expand their comfort zone. That is to say, expand the range of places and situations where they don't have to deal with anxiety or panic attacks. First they go to those places and once they're used to it, no more anxiety.

I don't think that's a bad thing, but it's ultimately not the solution.

When your aim is to make that comfort zone bigger, all you're doing is increasing the number of places where you feel fine. But exposure means exposure to anxiety. The place or situation is just the setting. You've got to deliberately provoke anxiety and learn to feel it without distress.

As you get better at having and handling anxiety, you'll find that it happens less often. Eventually it will become an occasional annoyance that you can easily shrug off.

Expanding your comfort zone is very helpful, and as you keep doing exposures, it's going to happen anyway whether that's your intention or not. It's simply part of the process. But it shouldn't be your objective. Don't get caught up in it.

You should be measuring your progress by how well you handle anxiety when it happens, and not by how many new places and situations you can be in without anxiety. To do exposures properly you should be aiming to experience anxiety and panic attacks.

I'm not saying you've got to dive in the deep end right away. You can start with easy challenges, but you should always try to put yourself under at least a bit of pressure. And then the better you get, the more you can ramp up the pressure.

Exposure is about getting used to discomfort until it becomes rare. Your comfort zone will

expand as you go, that's just a fact. But that's not the point.

Having said that, when your comfort zone increases, you can use the outer edges (the furthest you can travel, the most you can currently handle), as a springboard. For example, if you can go out 3 miles from home, you can gradually ease your way out further.

When you've been doing exposures for some time, and frequently put yourself through minor discomfort, you'll find that your tolerance will improve. You'll naturally develop the ability and enthusiasm to push yourself by larger increments.

In fact, don't be surprised if you end up in all sorts of places. There were times when I was in a forest or far away town, looked around and thought, "I can't believe I'm here". It's a good feeling.

From now on, think less in terms of expanding your comfort zone, and more about exploring the discomfort zone. And when you can handle that, you'll realize that it was always about you, and not the place or situation.

[Previous post](#)

[Back to contents](#)

[Next post](#)

What's It Like To Have A Panic Attack And Not Care?



Did you know that you are capable of experiencing the sensations of a panic attack, while remaining calm, and without distress? You may think it's impossible, but it's not.

The more exposures you do, the more you get used to whatever sensations you have along the way. Whether it's slight nervousness, mild anxiety, significant anxiety, or a panic attack.

The real obstacle with agoraphobia is the fear of how you'll feel. The fear of those horrible sensations. But if you can get used to having them, you'll find that you can handle them better than you might think.

When you experience something unpleasant many times, the effect starts to wear off. Rather than being an intense, dramatic experience, it becomes only a mild annoyance. But as you get used to that annoyance, and you realize that it's no big deal, you actually begin to enjoy it. Why? Because you get to observe yourself having the experience without getting distressed, which is a really nice feeling in itself.

If you do exposures for long enough and go through the feelings enough times, you learn what to expect. You get used to it. You'll be amazed at how quickly you'll get the hang of navigating yourself through it. And then you'll kick yourself for not having done it sooner.

When you observe yourself comfortably panicking, this will prove to you that experiencing a sensation (whether physical or emotional) is separate to its effect on you, i.e. whether or not it distresses you.

You can have a panic attack while being both the experiencer and the observer. And when you identify more with the observer, you can remain detached. You can watch the feelings

come, hang around for a while, and then leave.

It's certainly a bizarre experience. When it happens, you'll probably be confused at first. You may feel like something isn't quite right. "Am I really panicking or am I imagining it?", you might ask yourself. Just focus on being the observer. Pay attention to the panic attack. Notice that it's not who you are, it's just something that is happening.

Eventually it will fade. But be prepared to wait quite a while before it does. However, you won't be affected negatively. You'll be both curious about what's happening, and amazed at your ability to sit with it comfortably.

Being able to handle anxiety without distress will give you a huge amount of confidence. It's the ultimate superpower.

[Previous post](#)

[Back to contents](#)

[Next post](#)

Don't Let Reinforcement Turn Into Complacency



The way to do exposures is to put yourself in challenging situations repeatedly. The purpose of this is so that you'll get used to facing whatever makes you anxious. Along the way, it's a good idea to reinforce your progress by doing certain journeys at least a couple of times.

As you keep doing more and more exposures, there will be times when you'll look back and be impressed at how far you've progressed, and how well you're doing. Whenever this happens, take some time to give yourself a pat on the back. It's important to maintain morale.

However, try not to make the mistake of "celebrating" by repeating previous journeys unnecessarily. Don't get too comfortable.

It's OK to feel pleased with yourself, but don't allow yourself to get complacent. If you want to celebrate, do it by keeping up the momentum and challenging yourself more. You have to try to keep the pressure on each time. It doesn't have to be a lot of pressure, but at least enough to stretch yourself and expand the range of situations that you can handle. And more importantly, increase your ability to handle discomfort.

If you keep doing the same kinds of journeys and putting yourself in the same situations over and over, in a way you're telling yourself that this is as far as you can go. This will eventually cause you to get too scared to go further.

It's important to remain in a state of growth. Even if that means walking a couple of minutes more down that street, or getting off the bus one station further. You don't have to progress in big leaps, even small things count.

If you feel that you need to stay at a certain level for a while, by all means do so.
Reinforcement is important and it has its role. But when you're ready, it's time to move on.
Make every exposure count. Keep yourself under pressure. You can handle it.

Using Affirmations To Enhance Your Exposures



When it comes to self talk, my usual advice is that it's best to focus more on exposures. The reason being that it's no good telling yourself that you're confident if you're not actually proving it. Without anything to back up your words, they don't really do much. It's just wishful thinking.

However, self talk is in fact very helpful. The thing is, you need to know the best time and the best way to do it. And the very best time to do them is during exposures. You have to be action oriented rather than endlessly talking to yourself about how you want to feel. Affirmations are great for reprogramming your amygdala, but you have to take action too.

Affirmations are about more than just what you say to yourself. You need to first put yourself in the right frame of mind. This means accepting that you might panic.

When you talk to yourself, it's best to accompany your words with the right posture. Stand up straight and walk confidently. Everything you can do to back up those words will reinforce them and help you. Also, don't forget to smile. And I don't just mean internally.

Here are some examples of the kinds of affirmations that you can say to yourself. These are my own, you should come up with your own if you feel the need.

“There is no danger” : This has been my default mantra. It's the most important thing to keep in mind during an exposure, and worth reminding yourself of. The purpose of an exposure is to demonstrate that you're in no danger. So when you do this, affirm it by saying it as well.

“I'm here and I will be here for some time” : It's easy to get really scared and wish you could wave a magic wand and instantly be home again. But you have to accept that you are

wherever you are, for now. Acceptance, if you're willing to try it, is a great way of taking the pressure off. Once you accept that you're out there in the wilderness, and there's no escape for now, you can just get on with dealing with it.

"I did this and I can do this again" : This is a good one for when you're on your way back home. It's a way to strengthen the feeling of achievement and confidence that you'll get after you've challenged yourself and succeeded.

Before you say an affirmation, it's a good idea to first feel the essence of what you're about to say before you say it. That way when you say it, it will have more meaning. For example, if you're about to tell yourself that you're handling an anxious moment well, feel that pride and confidence before you affirm it with words. Again, smiling works wonders. A smile can drown out negative feelings very quickly.

Another thing you can do is say an affirmation whenever something positive happens. For example, if you get a bit anxious and then a few moments later you feel fine, say an affirmation such as "Well that wasn't too bad". In fact, why not narrate your whole journey with positive self talk.

So you see, you can use affirmations in a powerful way, one that will make your inner dialogue part of the experience. This will help create an overall positive memory of the exposure.

I'll reiterate, affirmations are very helpful. But don't use them as a substitute for action. Get out there, put yourself in challenging situations, and then use them. Do it, then say it.

[Previous post](#)

[Back to contents](#)

[Next post](#)

You've Arrived At Your Destination. Now What?



It's important to make sure that each exposure carries as much weight as possible. Exposures shouldn't just be quick journeys where you briefly show your face somewhere and then scurry back home like a frightened mouse. Each journey should benefit you. Here are some things that you can do when you arrive at your destination to make the most of the experience.

The first thing you can do is make yourself vividly aware of how far you are from home. Think about how you got there, and how you're going to have to get back, and how long it's going to take. Accept that you're there and you're not going to be able to be back home for some time.

Observe your surroundings and be mindful of your environment. Make the exposure count by getting your senses involved as much as you can. Pay attention to the sounds going on around you, perhaps listen to conversations if possible. Be aware of any movements going on. Breathe the air and feel your presence.

Rather than going home right away, hang around for a while. Interact with whatever is happening around you. Walk into a shop, sit down somewhere, touch a tree if there are any around. You might want to take a book and sit somewhere and read. If you see someone walk past you, stop them and ask for directions. It doesn't matter if you don't need them.

Walk around the area and get comfortable and settled. Go a bit further out, and look back. Remind yourself that if you wanted to, you could venture out even further. Explore the area and have a good look around.

And finally, as you get ready to go back home, give yourself a pat on the back for doing

another exposure. You can now make your way back home with pride. And while you're at it, you can start thinking about your next journey. Don't get complacent. Always be ready for the next exposure. Onwards and upwards at all times.

[Previous post](#)

[Back to contents](#)

[Next post](#)

Don't Resist, Don't Turn Back, Don't Run Away



It seems very counter-intuitive but when you're anxious or panicking, you have to stay where you are. When you're anxious, that's exactly when you have to stand your ground and stay put.

It might seem to you that by getting away you're relieving yourself of stress. But it's the opposite. By running away, you're telling yourself that you're in danger. Do you think that's going to make you feel calm? Of course not. It's going to make you anxious.

You must respond to any anxiety with courage. You've got to train yourself to let anxiety wash over you while you simply surrender and allow it. Resist the urge to turn around and go home. Just stay right where you are.

Remember that one moment you could be anxious, but just seconds later you could feel totally fine again. Let each anxious wave come and go, and keep in mind that with each one you're becoming stronger.

A panic attack won't kill you. Your world isn't going to fall apart and you're not going to be destroyed by it. It's just unpleasant, that's all. Each wave of anxiety is like a test. Your amygdala is behaving like there's danger, but you don't have to go along with it.

You can disagree with it, and the way to do that is by summoning all of your courage and staying where you are. That courage is already in you. Use it, that's what it's for.

It doesn't matter how you feel after you do this. What matters is that you do it. It won't go unnoticed by your amygdala. This is what exposure is about, it's about feeling the horrible sensations and moving on.

Of course, even after you successfully deal with a wave of anxiety by staying put, it can come back again seconds later. Accept this. Be OK with the possibility. Imagine that you're walking into the sea. There will be waves. All you have to do is get into the rhythm and float up and down along with them.

I know it might feel like you're going to be stressed by it, but as long as you do it with calm acceptance, it won't be too bad. Just brace yourself, deal with it, then relax and continue with whatever you're doing.

Try not to dwell on when the next wave will come. Just focus on whatever is going on in the moment. This is called mindfulness. The only moment is now, followed by another now, and so on. And when a wave comes, ride it and then get your balance back.

Every time you do this you'll be chipping away at your agoraphobia habit.

[Previous post](#)

[Back to contents](#)

[Next post](#)

Anxiety Is Exciting



There are different ways to look at anxiety and why it happens. One way to look at it is that it's nervous energy seeking an outlet. The more you shield yourself from every day life and its potential difficulties and tricky situations, the less competent you become at dealing with them. And guess what, you're going to become anxious when there's no need.

Just like if an army doesn't train regularly, or if a boxer doesn't train often to keep in shape, if you don't expose yourself to every day life, you'll be mentally out of shape. You'll be weak even in the face of things that you should easily be able to deal with.

This is why exposures are so important. You need to put yourself out there and experience different emotions, vibes and environments. Otherwise you'll turn on yourself. You'll find reasons to put stress into your life, due to living in a comfort zone where there is little if any of it.

Your system needs a certain amount of stress. It's good for you and keeps you on your toes. It's at its best when it has something to deal with. And if you don't give it what it needs, it will make stuff up, such as making you feel under threat when you're at the supermarket or wherever it may be. If you don't go into the jungle once in a while, the jungle will come to you.

So next time you're anxious, pause for a moment and appreciate that what you're experiencing is excitement. If you want, it can be negative excitement, but that's not a beneficial way to see it. You can instead view it as positive excitement. How you experience it is up to you.

Imagine that you're a couple of miles from home in streets that you're unfamiliar with. Or

let's say you're at an event or some other situation that you may find daunting. You do have the choice to make a drama out of it and catastrophize. But you can also choose to view the situation as one filled with potential.

Potential for what? I don't know, that's up to you. Don't you sometimes get excited for no apparent reason? I'm sure you can put yourself into a positively excited frame of mind if you really want to.

Your mind and body were built to deal with danger and threats. And to prepare you for action when it's necessary. So get out of that comfort zone, and experience life and all its major and minor ups and downs. Give your mind something to respond to.

Anxiety is exciting. That can mean scary exciting, or exciting in a positive way. It's your choice. Reframe the experience as something that will make you feel proud and strong. I know you don't want to miss out on all that life has to offer, so take control of your perceptions and you'll see yourself and your life in a much better way.

[Previous post](#)

[Back to contents](#)

[Next](#)

Overcoming Agoraphobia Will Make You A Better Person



Not only will beating agoraphobia enable you to live your life the way you want, it also has other benefits. Here are some ways that you'll become a better person.

Courage : People without agoraphobia only have to deal with real dangers and threats when they present themselves. However, you also have to deal with the fear of fear. In other words, being afraid of how you'll feel in certain places and situations. That's a lot to handle. It takes a lot of courage to go against your own brain when it's telling you that you're in danger.

Persistence : Gaining control of your mind requires a lot of exposures over a period of time. You've got to keep at it if you want to see substantial results. There will be setbacks, but if you're persistent you'll start to see those setbacks as part of your progress. You've got to keep bouncing back and eventually you'll feel a difference in how you feel.

Patience : You're probably not going to beat agoraphobia by just doing a few exposures. It's going to take at least months. It may take a year, or maybe even two. It depends on how often you do exposures, as well as how you go about it. If you can stick with it, it will make you a more patient person.

Thick skin : Facing the unpleasant sensations of anxiety and panic attacks repeatedly will make you tougher. You'll be better able to handle life's ups and downs. If you can conquer yourself and take a stand against your own weaknesses, just think what you'll be able to handle throughout your life in the future.

You'll get to know yourself better : Doing multiple exposures will force you to examine yourself and what makes you tick. As you get better at them, you'll learn about what you're

really afraid of and what your issues are. You'll have plenty of time to contemplate what it is that made you anxious to begin with.

Having agoraphobia gives you the opportunity to build character. Why be a victim? You might as well do everything you can to turn it into a strength. You can become a much stronger person that you would have if you'd never had this challenge. It's up to you make the best of it.

[Previous](#)

[Back to contents](#)

Agoraphobia Exposure

Guidance And Encouragement To Beat Agoraphobia One On One Exposure Coaching

The most effective way to overcome agoraphobia is to put yourself into potentially anxious situations.

By repeatedly experiencing anxiety or at least the risk of anxiety, you take away its power, reducing it to no more than a mild, occasional annoyance that you can easily handle.

But it's not always easy. For some, it can be so scary that they wouldn't dare to try it, unless they had encouragement, support and guidance. There's nothing wrong with that, everyone is different.

And that's what I'm offering to you if you're one of those people. I will give you the guidance and encouragement that you need, if you'll let me.

To find out more, click [HERE](#).

Agoraphobia Exposure

[Blog](#)
[Forum](#)
[Reader's Questions](#)

[Guest Post](#)
[Coaching](#)
[Subscribers](#)