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Exposure Therapy

Believe it or not, being placed in the situation that is fearful to us can in itself be helpful in resolving our panic and anxiety, although the reaction of the panic attack sufferer is to avoid these situations. This is precisely what happens with exposure therapy.¹

Exposure therapy is a form of cognitive therapy that allows the anxiety or panic sufferer to go into a situation, that normally if he/she were just to think about, he/she would begin to feel anxious and fearful of a panic attack. In the therapy though this is done within the confines of a controlled setting. In other words, normally the therapist will be present while the anxiety sufferer goes into this situation.

Let's look at an example of exposure therapy. Let's say that you suffer from panic attacks and just the thought of going to the mall makes you incredibly anxious, your palms sweat, and your heart races really fast. You continually tell yourself that you're unable to go to the mall because you are scared you will have a heart attack or go crazy.

What the therapist will do is get you to go the mall and face your fears. When you are able to see that nothing will happen, your anxiety brought on by this situation decreases. In exposure therapy the exposure happens gradually. You might start by just getting in your car and driving to the mall. Then you might go into the mall the next time and not stay very long. The next time you might stay a little longer, and so on.

Now this may sound overly simplistic, but it can be a very effective technique for helping people recover from their anxiety and panic attacks. When we think about the above example, we see that for someone not suffering from panic attacks the whole fear may appear irrational.

To someone who suffers from panic attacks, though, the fear not only seems rational, it can be very crippling. It is no surprise that sufferers of panic attacks sometimes also suffer from agoraphobia.

Simply put, agoraphobia is fear of fear. In other words, people who suffer from agoraphobia are scared of being scared. It is not surprising that someone suffering from panic attacks will avoid things that cause them fear.

You can see how one might be fearful of going to a mall and then by staying within the fear of their home they are able to avoid the things that scare them. Being exposed to these situations slowly over time will allow them to confront their fears instead of being controlled by them.

Exposure therapy is just one of many techniques that, for free, I discuss in my newsletter on anxiety, panic attacks, and agoraphobia. Join my newsletter and receive an abundance of interesting information and techniques information that can help you with your panic attacks, agoraphobia and anxiety.

For more information about panic attacks, agoraphobia, and anxiety, please sign up for our free newsletter by simply visiting www.PanicAttackRecovery.com and providing your email address in the sign-up box. Subscribers can opt out of our newsletter at any time.

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1. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exposure_therapy