

Systematic Desensitization



SD vs. Modeling or Cognitive Interventions?

- When a client has the skills but avoids the situation due to anxiety.
- If a person avoids a situation because of skill deficits, then SD is inadequate



SD vs. Modeling or Cognitive Interventions?

- People with many fears or with general, pervasive anxiety may benefit more from cognitive change strategies or from combinations of strategies in which desensitization may play some role.
- Desensitization should not be used when the client's anxiety is nonspecific, or free-floating.
- Desensitization is appropriate for problems in which there is a strong conditioned emotion like anger or grief.



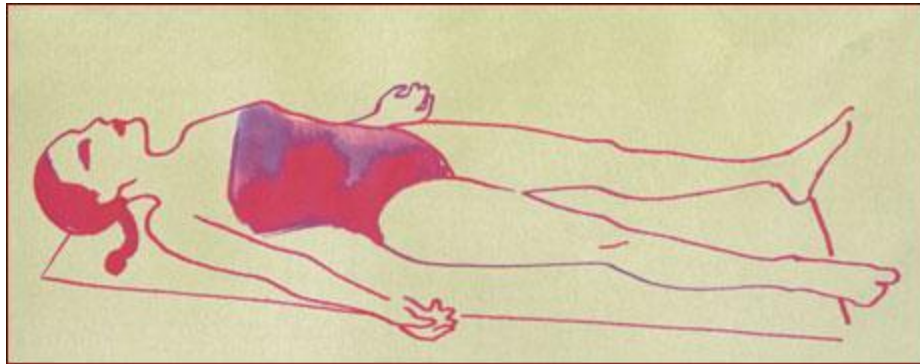
Major steps in Systematic Desensitization



- Rationale
- Assessment
 - Identification of Emotion-Provoking situations
 - Imagery Assessment
- Intervention
 - Hierarchy Construction
 - Selection and Training of Counter-conditioning or Coping Response
 - Scene Presentation
- Homework and Follow-Up

Rationale

- Reason for treatment and why it works
- Description of procedure
- Check for permission



Imagery Assessment

- Is the image concrete, with sufficient detail and evidence of touch, sound, smell, and sight sensations.
- Is the client a participant, not an observer.
- Can the client switch a scene image on and off upon instruction.
- Can the client hold a particular scene without drifting off or changing the scene.



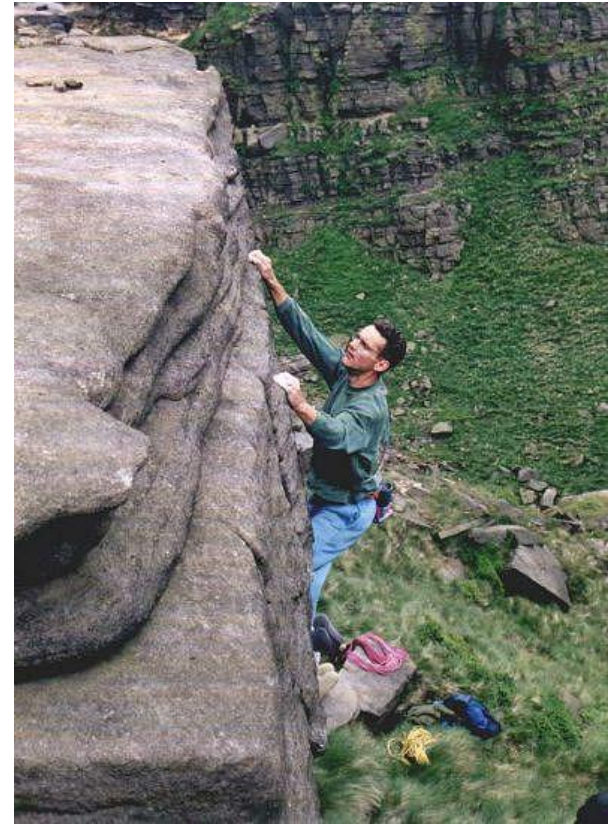
Methods of identification of emotion- provoking situations

- Interview assessment
- Client self-monitoring
- Self-report questionnaires



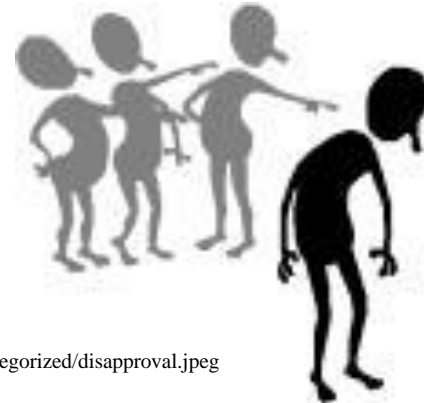
Two types of hierarchies

- Spatio-temporal Hierarchy
- Idiosyncratic Hierarchy



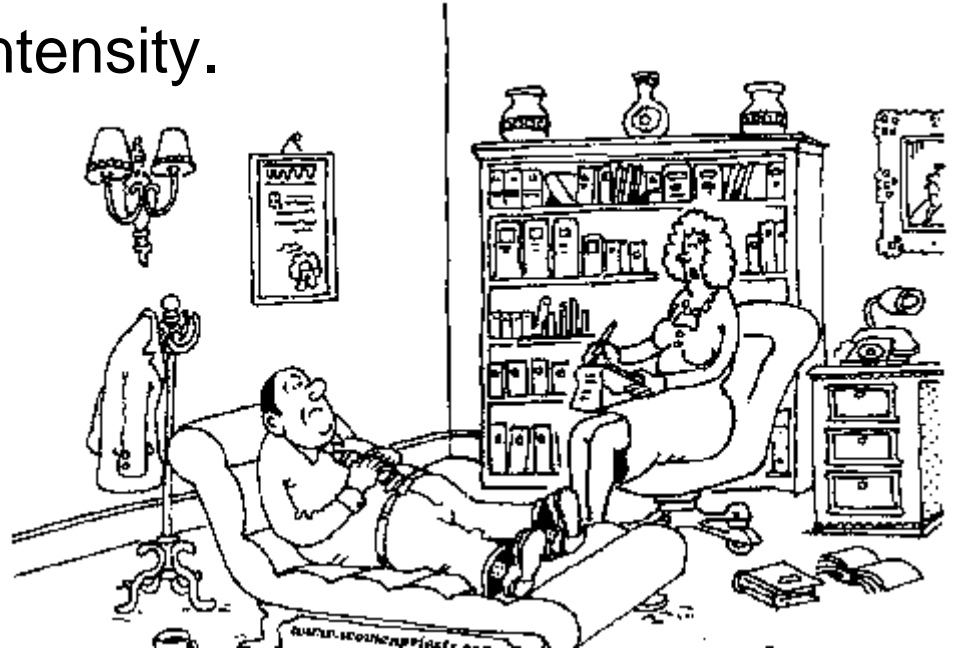
Appropriate Hierarchy Items

- Some of the items are under the client's control
- An item must be concrete and specific.
- Obtain a clear and vivid visualization of the item during scene presentation.
- Not "your best friend disapproves of you"
- Better "Your best friend disapproves of your boyfriend and tells you that you are stupid for going out with him."



Criteria for Appropriate Hierarchy Items

- Similar to situations the client has or may have to face.
- Adapt dialogue to the client.
- Reflect a broad range of situations in which the client's fear (or other emotion) does or could occur.
- Items should reflect all different levels of the emotion, ranging from low to high intensity.



Spatio-temporal Hierarchy: Fear of Heights

1. You are walking along the sidewalk.
It is on a completely level street.
2. You are walking along the sidewalk, ascending. At the top of the street, you look down and realized you've climbed a hill.
3. You are climbing a ladder up to a second story window.
4. You are riding in a car and the road curves higher and higher.
5. You are riding in a car and you look outside. You notice you are driving on the edge of a good-sized hill.
6. You are starting to climb to the top of a fire tower. You are halfway up. You look down and see how far you've climbed.
7. You are climbing a ladder to the roof of a three story house.
8. You have climbed to the top of a fire tower and look down.
9. You are riding in a car and are at the edge of a cliff on a mountain.
10. You are at the very top of a mountain, looking down into the surrounding valley.

Spatio-temporal Hierarchy: Fear of Giving Speeches

1. Your instructor casually mentions a required speech to be given by the end of the course.
2. Your instructor passes around a sign-up sheet for the speeches. You sign up.
3. You talk about the speech with some of your classmates. You aren't sure what to say.
4. You go to the library to look up some source material for your speech. You don't find too much.
5. Some of your classmates start to give speeches. You think about how good their speeches are and wonder how good yours will be.
6. It is a week before the speech. You're spending a lot of time working on it.
7. It is the day before the speech. You're going over your notes religiously.
8. It is the night before the speech. You lie awake thinking about it.
9. It is the next morning. You wake up and remember it is speech day. You don't feel hungry at breakfast.
10. Later that morning you're walking to speech class. A classmate comes up and says "Well, I guess you're on today".
11. You're sitting in speech class. The instructor will call you in any moment. You keep going over your major points.

Idiosyncratic Hierarchy: Fear of Being rejected

1. You speak to a stranger on the street. He doesn't hear you.
2. You go into a department store and request some information from one of the clerks. The clerk snaps at you in response.
3. You ask a stranger to give you change. She gives you a sarcastic reply.
4. You ask a casual acquaintance to lend you a book. He refuses.
5. You ask a friend to come over for dinner. The friend is too busy to come.
6. You apply for a membership in a social club, and your application is denied.
7. You are competing for a job. You and another person are interviewed. The other person is hired, you are not chosen.
8. You have an argument with your best friend. She leaves suddenly. You don't hear from her for a while.
9. You have an argument with your partner. Your partner says he would rather do things alone than with you.
10. Your partner says he doesn't love you anymore.

Idiosyncratic Hierarchy: Loss of a Close Relationship

1. You remember a warm, starry night. You ask this woman you love to marry you. She accepts. You are very happy.
2. The two of you are traveling together soon after your marriage, camping out and traveling around in a van.
3. The two of you are running in the water together at the beach, having a good time together.
4. You and this person are eating dinner together at home.
5. The two of you are disagreeing over how to spend money. She wants to save it; you are arguing to use some of it for camping supplies.
6. The two of you are arguing over your child. She wants the child to go with you on all trips; you want a babysitter occasionally.
7. The two of you are starting to eat some meals apart. You are working late to avoid coming home for dinner.
8. She is wrapped up in her social activities; you, in your work. On the weekends you go your separate ways.
9. You have a discussion about your relationship and separate activities. You start sleeping on the couch.
10. The two of you go to see a lawyer to initiate discussion about a separation.

Sample Hierarchy

(Anxious About Taking a Test)

- Your instructor announces on the first day of class that the first exam will be held in one month. You know that the month will go quickly.
- A week before the exam, you are sitting in the class and the instructor reminds the class of the exam date. You realize you have a lot of studying to do during the week.
- You are sitting in the class and the instructor mentions the exam, scheduled for the next class session, two days away. You realize you still have a lot of pages to read.
- Now it is one day before the exam. You are studying in the library. You wonder whether you have studied as much as everyone else in the class.
- It is the night before the test. You are in your room studying. You think about the fact that this exam grade is one-third of your final grade.
- It is the night before the exam-late evening. You have just finished studying and have gone to bed. You're lying awake going over your reading in your mind.
- You wake up the next morning and your mind flashes that this is exam day. You wonder how much you will remember of what you read the night and day before.
- It is later in the day, one hour before the exam. You do some last-minute scanning of your lecture notes. You start to feel a little hassled- even a little sick. You wish you had more time to prepare.

Sample Hierarchy

(Anxious About Taking a Test)

- It is 15 minutes before the class- time to walk over to the classroom. As you're walking over, you realize how important this grade will be. You hope you don't "blank out".
- You go into the building, stop to get a drink of water, and then enter the classroom. You look around and see people laughing. You think that they are more confident and better prepared than you.
- The instructor is a little late. You are sitting in class waiting for the teacher to come and pass out the tests. You wonder what will be on the test.
- The instructor has just passed out the tests. You receive your copy. Your first thought is that the test is so long- will you finish on time?
- You start to work on the first portion of the test. There are some questions you aren't sure of. You spend time thinking and then see that people around you are writing. You skip these questions and go on.
- You look at your watch. The class is half over- only 25 minutes left. You feel you have dawdled on the first part of the test. You wonder how much your grade will be pulled down if you don't finish.
- You continue to work as fast as you can; occasionally you worry about the time. You glance at your watch- five minutes left. You still have a lot of unanswered questions.
- Time is just about up. There are some questions you had to leave blank. You worry again because this test accounts for one-third of your grade.

Arrange this External Series (Illness in Others)

- Child with two wasted legs
- Man walking slowly-short of breath owing to a weak heart
- Blind man working elevator
- Child with one wasted leg
- A hunchback
- A person groaning with pain
- A man with a club foot
- A one-armed man
- A one-legged man
- A person with a high temperature owing to a relatively non-dangerous disease such as influenza.

Arrange this Hierarchy (Math-related anxiety)

- Sitting in English class thinking about math.
- On way to math class
- At home, doing math homework
- At home studying for a math test
- In math class, teacher giving out test
- In math class, taking test
- In math class, teacher asking me question
- In math class, at board, having trouble
- In math class, working problems at desk, not knowing some answers
- Asking teacher for help
- Volunteering an answer
- Getting test or assignment back with low grade
- Hearing teacher tell me I'll flunk or barely pass
- Doing anything with numbers, even outside math class, like adding up a list of numbers
- Talking about math with someone

Coping Response

- Relaxation
- Emotive Imagery
- Meditation



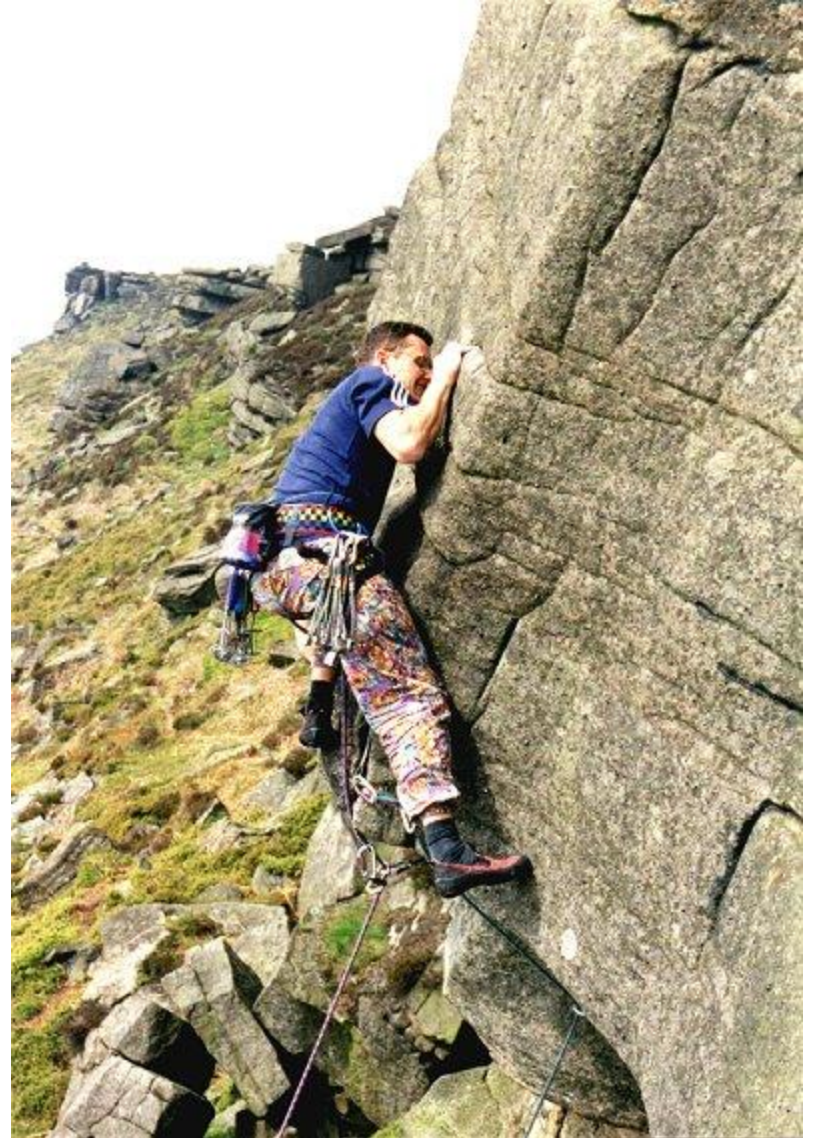
Hierarchy Scene Presentation

- Imagine scene
20 to 40 seconds
- When anxiety is felt
- Hold image
- Relax away tension



Homework

- Daily practice
- Visualization of previously successful items
- Practice in vivo
- Completion of log sheet



Systematic Desensitization

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- Hierarchy Construction
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- Imagery Assessment
- Hierarchy Scene Presentation
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