MY FEAR LADDER AND EXPOSURE PLANNER

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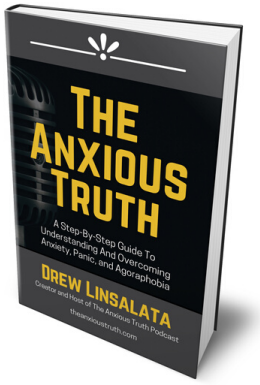

THANK YOU FOR DOWNLOADING MY FREE FEAR LADDER AND EXPOSURE PLANNER.

This free worksheet is a companion to my comprehensive 450-page anxiety recovery guide - "*The Anxious Truth*". You can find this book at **https://theanxioustruth.com/recovery-guide**

Additional copies of this worksheet can be downloaded at **https://theanxioustruth.com/downloads.** Feel free to print as many copies of this worksheet as you need, or to share it with anyone you think might need it**.**

All the episodes of my podcast going back over 5 years, and all the resources I've made available about anxiety, anxiety disorders, and anxiety recovery can be found on my website at **theanxioustruth.com**.

HOW TO USE THIS WORKSHEET

The worksheet is referenced in chapter 4 of my recovery guide. It is designed to be used as a tool to help you create a well defined exposure and recovery plan. The worksheet will walk you through the steps of identifying your fears, identifying your fear triggers, turning triggers into recovery goals, then categorizing those goals and prioritizing them from easiest to most challenging. The object is to create a well defined recovery and exposure plan that includes measurable goals that you work toward in sequence. This will give you the best chance of succeeding in your recovery efforts.

IF YOU FEEL THAT YOU HAVE NO DEFINED FEARS OR TRIGGERS

Many of my readers and listeners will tell me that they have no clearly defined fears or triggers, just "random" panic attacks. Panic attacks are rarely if ever truly random. They are most times triggered by the sensations and thoughts that you fear are the harbingers of the next attack. When attempting to use the worksheet, think in terms of the situations and contexts in which those triggering sensations and thoughts arise most often. Those situations and contexts become your triggers, and will therefore lead to your recovery goals. It may take some time for you to really define these things, but I promise that you do not have special random anxiety that can't be addressed.

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1 - YOUR FEARS AND THE THINGS THAT TRIGGER THEM

List all the things you are afraid of. These are not places or tasks. We're looking for a list of the things you really fear underneath. Your list of fears may include things like a rapid heartbeat, heavy breathing, feeling dizzy, nausea, depersonalization, and other **sensations**. Your list might also include **thoughts** that you fear such as going insane, looking foolish or being embarrassed, or having a panic attack that somehow never ends. You may also fear things like needing help and not being able to get it, or losing your relationships or career because of your anxiety.

For each fear or category of fear, list the places, tasks, people, or situations that "trigger" this fear. These are the things you try to avoid. For example, a person afraid that they need to be saved from panic will avoid being alone. Being alone would be the trigger. You may find that your fears have many triggers. Leaving the house, eating at a restaurant, driving on the highway, etc. This is fine. There's no wrong way to use this sheet. We only care about getting your fears and triggers on the paper.

THINGS I AM AFRAID OF:

TRIGGER ACTIVITIES & SITUATIONS:

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THE ANXIOUS TRUTH
AN ANXIETY, PANIC AND AGORAPHOBIA PODCAST

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2 - TURNING TRIGGERS INTO GOALS

Now that you have a list of activities and situations you have been avoiding (because they trigger the thoughts and sensations you fear), let's turn those into concrete, measurable goals.

For each triggering activity or situation, assign a goal or set of goals that you will work toward. For example, if driving is a triggering activity, you might set "drive for one hour on the highway alone" or "drive myself to the supermarket" as your goals. If being alone is a trigger, you might set a goal of being home alone for 8 hours.

The object here is to create goals that you can measure so that you can work systematically and objectively toward those goals.

TRIGGER ACTIVITY/SITUATION:	MEASURABLE GOAL:

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3 - CATEGORIZING YOUR GOALS

Now that you have your first list of recovery goals, let's organize them into one of three categories:

Near Term/Immediate Goals (**N**): The things that would have the most impact on your life if you were to achieve them. Often, these involve basic daily tasks like grocery shopping, driving the kids to school, or being left alone while the rest of the family is able to work or tend to other things.

Mid-Range Goals (**M**) : The goals that you would like to work on, but that have less daily or immediate impact on your life. This might include things like a long weekend away, getting a part time job, or resuming your studies.

Long-Term Goals (**L**): These are the "biggest" items on your goals list, but also the items that either involve major life changes, or happen rarely and only in special instances. These might include starting a family, changing careers, or moving to another city or country.

GOAL	CATEGORY N - M - L

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GOAL	CATEGORY N - M - L

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4 - CREATING YOUR FEAR LADDER

This is the part where you actually plan out what your exposures are going to be. This is the fear ladder. For each goal category, write your goals, then prioritize them numerically from the easiest and least scary to the hardest and most scary. It doesn't have to be perfect. Sometimes things will change over time, and that's OK. We just want to create a list of goals - and therefore exposures - that you can work from in a systematic way. This is much more effective than "winging it", and will give you a playbook you can come back to when you're not sure what to do next.

Print as many of these pages as you need to. Fill them up, then for each category work from the easiest to the hardest goal. As you achieve each goal, check it off the list and move on to the next. Climb the fear ladder! :-)

Note that it's perfectly OK to be working on a few different goals at the same time. Life may require that. You might even work in goals in different categories at the same time. That's OK too. Just be mindful of staying as close to your priority list as is practical. Don't try to solve the entire problem at once, and don't try to achieve every goal at once. Being systematic about this will give you the best chance at success.

DONE!	GOAL	CATEGORY N - M - L	PRIORITY
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DONE!	GOAL	CATEGORY N - M - L	PRIORITY
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JOIN THE DISCUSSION! SHARE YOUR PROGRESS!

You are welcomed to join the discussion and the social media community surrounding my books and my podcast. Share your progress by posting photos of the completed steps along your fear ladder! Tag me and use the hashtag ***#theanxioustruth*** .

There is a vibrant and extremely supportive group of fine humans in my Facebook group: **https://theanxioustruth.com/forum**

My main Facebook page for the books and podcast: **https://theanxioustruth.com/facebook**

My Instagram: **https://theanxioustruth.com/instagram**

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