

Prolonged Exposure Protocol

SESSION 1 – Rationale for program

- Rationale for the program (see handout)
 - Explain treatment procedures
 - imaginal exposure – process the memory repeatedly for 30-60 min
 - *in vivo* - Approach situations that you have been avoiding because the situations are reminders
 - predict discomfort during and between sessions – available by phone
 - breathing retraining
 - (cognitive restructuring: teach you to evaluate how realistic are your beliefs about self and world, including beliefs about yourself for your thoughts/feelings/reactions)
 - Explain focus is on PTSD symptoms
- Collect info relevant to the assault (See AIHI in Appendix of book)
- Introduce breathing retraining
 - Purpose: Slow down breathing → decreased O₂ in blood → decreased anxiety
 - Breathing instructions: (see handout)
- Assign homework
 - Practice breathing retraining for 10 minutes, 3x/day
 - Listen to audiotape of session once
 - Read treatment rationale handout once

SESSION 2 – Introduction to *In Vivo* and SUDS

- Review HW (breathing exercise and listening to tape of session)
- Present agenda
- **Common Reactions to Assault handout** (education re PTSD)
- ***In vivo*** exposure explained
 - Rationale
 - Distress is related to avoidance of situations and memories that remind you of the assault. However, avoidance prolongs the reactions.
 - Elicit examples of client avoidance
 - Confronting painful experiences allows one to process the experience and for pain to lessen
 - Avoidance of situations that are realistically safe b/c of the related anxiety only reinforces belief that the situations are unsafe and that the anxiety is unrelenting
 - **Habituation** --Repeated exposure to anxiety-producing situations results in decrease in anxiety
 - **Examples:**
 - Child and ocean wave and gradual reintroduction to ocean
 - Taxi-driver overcoming fear of bridges
 - Dogs, etc
 - Explain ***in vivo* hierarchy** will be identified according to levels of distress. This will be a list of situations and/or people that were once enjoyable or important to you that you now avoid
 - SUDS (0 to 100) – Explain scale, including level now and at time of assault. Use anchors as needed to develop sense of ratings.
 - Construct hierarchy of avoided situations – elicit specific examples of the situations, people, places avoided since the trauma incident
Use the ***In Vivo* Hierarchy Form** to make list
 - Select *in vivo* assignments for hw
 - Start with situation that have SUDS of 40-60
 - Can review sample exercise **(from page 155)**
 - By end of treatment, client should do daily practice of all that are listed.
 - Instructions for procedure:
 - Begin with situation that evoke moderate anxiety (eg SUDS = 50)
 - Client puts self in anxiety provoking but safe situation
 - Client records time and initial SUDS rating on the ***In Vivo* Exposure Homework Recording Form**
 - Client must remain in situation for 30-45 min or until anxiety decreases by at least 50%
 - Client records endpoint SUDS for this situation
- Assign HW:
 - Read Common Reactions Handout
 - Continue to practice Breathing retraining
 - Review list of avoided situations at home and add to list
 - Begin *in vivo* exposure assignments
 - Listen to audiotape of session once

In Vivo Exposure Homework

Situation to be practiced: _____

Before performing the *in-vivo* exposure, answer the following questions:

1. What's the worst that could happen in this situation? _____

2. What is the likelihood that this could happen? _____

3. Evaluate the evidence for and against the likelihood of this happening? _____

Ratings before and after *in-vivo* exposure:

Date	Start time	SUDS at start	PEAK SUDS	End time	SUDS at end	Total Time	Comments

Other Comments: _____

SESSION 3 Introduction to Imaginal Exposure

- Review HW
(Re-read Common Reactions, Breathing retraining, In Vivo assignment, add to list as needed, listen once to tape of session)
- Present agenda
- Rationale for imaginal exposure
 - Avoidance of memory, while understandable, maintains (or increases) anxiety (may be expressed through nightmares as well as day-time anxieties)
 - Staying with the memories will decrease fear, anxiety associated with memories. Gain control of memories instead of memories being in control of you.
 - Analogies:
 - Digestion
 - Filing
 - Loss and grief – experiencing feelings of loss, grief, lead to decrease of distress
 - GOAL: Enable you to have thoughts, conversation about the trauma and experience triggers associated with the trauma without experiencing the intense anxiety that disrupts your life.
 - PROCESS: Confront situations (*in vivo*) and memories (imaginal exposure) that generate anxiety and avoidance until memories become less painful (habituation).
 - **Emotional Processing:** repeated exposure helps organize memory and you learn that thinking about the trauma is not dangerous and feeling anxious is not dangerous
 - **Habituation:** repeated remembering/reliving will disconfirm the belief that anxiety lasts forever and will decrease the anxiety
 - **Discrimination between remembering and being retraumatized:** Helps you realize that remembering the trauma is not the same as experiencing the trauma.
 - **Increased Mastery:** Repeated exposure enhances sense of self-control and personal competence as you stop avoiding and begin mastering your fears
 - **Differentiation:** Exposure will decrease generalization of fear from the specific trauma to similar but safe situations.
- Conduct imaginal exposure
 - Remember the trauma as vividly as possible
 - Eyes closed
 - Present tense
 - Stay with emotions
 - Audiotape narrative
 - Every 10 min or so rating SUDS for present (in office)
 - Keep repeating up to 60 minutes
 - Open eyes, take several deep breaths
 - Discussion:
 - Remember things not previously recalled?
 - Easier or more difficult than anticipated?
 - Would anything else have helped?
 - Feeling in present?
 - Any other thoughts

SEE BACK FOR HOMEWORK

- Assign homework:
 - Continue breathing practice
 - Listen to audiotape of imaginal exposure at least daily; use **Exposure Homework Recording Form (p 169)**
 - Continue with *in vivo* exposure daily, working up the hierarchy with SUDS levels
 - Listen to audiotape of session once

Imaginal Exposure Homework

Situation to be practiced: _____

Before performing the *imaginal* exposure, answer the following questions:

1. What's the worst that could happen in this situation? _____

2. What is the likelihood that this could happen? _____

3. Evaluate the evidence for and against the likelihood of this happening? _____

Ratings before and after *imaginal* exposure:

Date	Start time	SUDS at start	PEAK SUDS	End time	SUDS at end	Total Time	Comments

Other Comments: _____

SESSION 4-8 (or 4-11)

- Review HW
- Present agenda
- Conduct imaginal exposure; focus on hot spots progressively
- Conduct *in vivo* exposure discussion/implementation
- Assign homework:
 - Continue breathing practice
 - Listen to imaginal exposure tape daily
 - Continue to perform *in vivo* exposure exercises
 - Listen to audiotape of the session once
- Last session of series only: Re-administer measure to determine whether tx ends or continues

FINAL SESSION (9 or 12)

- Review HW
- Present agenda
- Conduct imaginal exposure
- Review progress in detail, make suggestions for continued practice
- End