

# Systematic Desensitization: From Discussion to Images

Gather images of the client's feared/object situation for sharing in the session. You can use projected images on a screen at first, but you will also need magazine cut-outs or photos for direct handling by the client.

As you follow the six-step process, record the client's anxiety in the table below.

## Six-step process

1. Ask the client how they feel about sharing images of the feared object or triggering situation. Talking about it first may arouse some anxiety. After discussing sharing the images, ask them to rate the intensity of their anxiety on a scale of 1 to 10.
2. Guide the client through a relaxation practice, such as progressive muscle relaxation or deep breathing using one of our other worksheets. After the relaxation practice, ask the client to rate the intensity of their anxiety on a scale of 1 to 10.
3. Next, share the images you have gathered at a distance away from the client, by arranging them on a flat surface to look at or displaying them on a screen. Ask the client to describe how the client feels looking at the images. After sharing the images for a few minutes, ask again to rate the intensity of their anxiety on a scale of 1 to 10.
4. Guide the client through a relaxation practice, and after the relaxation practice, ask them to rate the intensity of their anxiety on a scale of 1 to 10.
5. Next, ask them to pick up the images and handle them, describing how they feel. After a few minutes, ask them to rate the intensity of their anxiety on a scale of 1 to 10.
6. While still holding the images and looking at them, ask the client to practice controlled deep breathing-in through the nose to a count of 3 and out through the mouth to a count of 3. After this final stage ask them to rate the intensity of their anxiety on a scale of 1 to 10.

## Anxiety scores

Enter the scores here for each step on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest and 10 the highest level of anxiety.

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6

## **Follow up**

You can ask the client to practice looking at pictures and handling them between sessions using the Systematic Desensitization Homework Worksheet.

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