

Systematic Desensitization: From Guided Visualization to Video

Locate short videos (no more than 5 minutes) associated with your client's feared/object situation for sharing in the session. You can search YouTube or just use Google and download them using a [free downloader tool](#) to ensure they do not buffer or freeze as might happen if you link to them online. You will need to use a laptop or a monitor screen.

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 watching videos of the feared object or triggering situation. Talking about it first may arouse some anxiety. After discussing watching the videos, 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. After the relaxation, ask them to rate the intensity of their anxiety on a scale of 1 to 10.
3. Next, take the client through a guided visualization related to their feared situation. Ask them to close their eyes while relaxed and imagine encountering their feared object or situation with all five senses. Ask them to imagine what they see and hear. How does their skin feel? Hot, warm, cold, clammy, prickly? Ask about their breathing, heart rate, any taste in their mouth, any smells, and any bodily sensations. After asking them to visualize the situation in their mind's eye for a few minutes, ask them to open their eyes and rate the intensity of their anxiety on a scale of 1 to 10.
4. Guide the client through a relaxation practice, and afterward ask your client to rate the intensity of their anxiety on a scale of 1 to 10.
5. Next, watch the videos together while asking the client to describe how they feel. After the videos have finished, ask them to rate the intensity of their anxiety on a scale of 1 to 10.
6. Finally, watch the videos together while asking 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 share the links to the short videos with your client to watch them between sessions while practicing relaxation, using the Systematic Desensitization Homework Worksheet.

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