

## The exposure hierarchy

Exposure therapy involves gradually facing the situations you've been avoiding. By staying in a feared situation without using safety behaviors, your brain learns that the danger isn't as high as it seems. This is called habituation.

**The SUDS scale** (Standard 0–100)

**100:** Extreme anxiety; highest distress you have ever felt.

**75:** High anxiety; strong urge to avoid or leave.

**50:** Moderate anxiety; uncomfortable, but you can stay in the situation.

**25:** Mild anxiety; noticeable but manageable.

**0:** No anxiety; totally relaxed

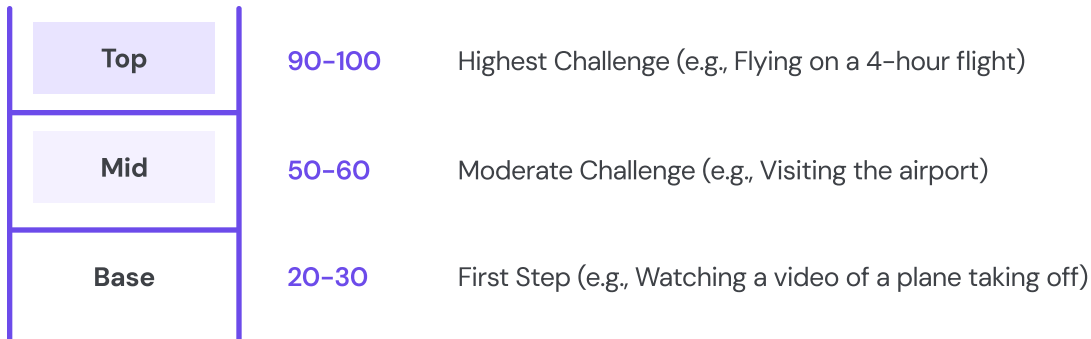
### Example Exposure Activities (Categorized)

Exposure should be challenging but manageable. It is not about putting yourself in actual danger; it is about facing the feeling of fear in a safe environment.

PTSD	Panic & Agoraphobia	Social & Situational
Watching a movie related to the trauma	Driving in the far-right lane of a highway	Ordering food at a counter
Visiting a location that feels triggering to you	Sitting in the middle of a theater row	Making a mistake on purpose (e.g., wrong name)
Holding a specific object or wearing a certain scent	Intentional hyperventilation (under supervision)	Eating alone in a crowded cafeteria
Writing a detailed narrative of the event	Walking through a large, open park alone	Making a phone call to ask for business hours
Staying in a dark room for 2 minutes	Using an elevator for one floor	Asking a stranger for the time

## Building Your Hierarchy

Exposure Activity | Predicted SUDS (0–100)



### Activity log

Date	Activity	Start SUDS	Peak SUDS	End SUDS	Time spent

What activities do you usually use for safety (e.g., checking your phone, tensing muscles, leaving the situation), and did you successfully reduce using them?

What did you learn about the perceived danger you feared versus what actually happened?