**Exposure Hierarchy Scale**

**(Sue Mills, MSW, RSW Child and Youth Counselor)**

Every one of use gets anxious or worried at some times in our life. This is normal. We are supposed to get worried, because worrying keeps us safe and out of danger. If we were never afraid of falling, we might walk along rooftops. Which would be very dangerous and really bad for our health and safety! We may worry about being in a car accident. So because of this we wear a seat belt to minimize our chances of getting hurt. We still take the risk of being in a car, but we minimize the chances of getting hurt by wearing our seatbelt.

Throughout our day we encounter varying degrees of worry or anxiety. Some of these are understandable and sometimes our worries seem to be unreasonable. Describe specific situations that make you anxious and the level of discomfort it gives you. On a scale of 0 to 10 ( 0 being not at all anxious, and 10 being extremely anxious) rate how much each situation affects you.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| …………………………………… Anxiety Producing Situation ………………………………………………………… | 0 – 10 |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

After ranking the situations that make you anxious, think about things that you could do to change the ranking to a lower level. Write that down on a separate piece of paper and then DO IT, don’t avoid it.

For Example: If I am feeling overwhelmed by an assignment, I could break the assignment down into smaller sections and then tackle each section one day at a time. This would lower my anxiety level (on the scale) about getting the assignment done. BUT, I would also get the assignment done and not AVOID doing it because it makes me anxious.

It is important to identify the things that make us anxious, but it is even more important to figure out a way that we can reduce our anxiety about something, and then ACTUALLY work on reducing the anxiety.