

Fear Hierarchy for Teens

This worksheet is designed to help you overcome your fears, one small step at a time. Start by naming your primary fear, then break the fear down in to smaller examples and rate each from least to most anxiety-provoking. Next, tackle each example, starting with the least anxiety-provoking. As you work through each example, your nervous system will begin to break the connection between the fear and your anxiety symptoms.

STEP 1: What is your primary fear?

Example: Fear of talking in front of people

STEP 2: List smaller challenges that are related to your primary fear

Making a speech in front of a large group

Making a phone call

Ordering food or a drink from a cashier

Raising my hand and answering a question in class

Giving a presentation to my class

Making small talk on the bus

Raising my voice to get someone's attention

STEP 3: Rate these challenges with the Anxiety Scale

Challenges That Trigger Your Fear	Anxiety Level
Making a speech in front of a large group	8
Making a phone call	4
Ordering food or a drink from a cashier	2
Raising my hand and answering a question in class	3
Giving a presentation to my class	7
Making small talk on the bus	5
Raising my voice to get someone's attention	6

Anxiety Scale

10 panic

9 

8 fearful

7 

6 afraid

5 

4 worried

3 

2 okay

1 

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Fear Hierarchy for Teens

STEP 4: Prepare for challenges

What makes this technique effective is **staying in the situation until your anxiety naturally comes down on its own**. This process is what helps your nervous system to learn that the feared situation is tolerable (and teaches your mind that situations are not as scary as you may think!).

As you can imagine, facing your fears and waiting for your anxiety to come down is difficult! So here are two ways to prepare for the challenge.

List effective coping skills in case they're needed

If a situation is far more challenging than you thought, you may need to use coping skills like taking a break, deep breathing, listening to music, or taking a walk. List coping skills that you know work for you on the right.

*deep breaths, listen to my favorite song,
text a friend*

Plan some appropriate rewards

Facing fears takes practice and motivation! Use the space to the right to consider small rewards you (or your parents) are willing to reward you with, like stickers, treats, money towards a purchase, etc.

*stickers, chocolates, money towards a
new videogame*

STEP 5: Plan your challenges and rewards, starting with the least scary

Challenges That Trigger Your Fear	Anxiety Level	Reward Per Try
<i>Ordering food or a drink from a cashier</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>sticker</i>
<i>Raising my hand and answering a question in class</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>sticker</i>
<i>Making a phone call</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>chocolates</i>
<i>Making small talk on the bus</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>chocolates</i>
<i>Raising my voice to get someone's attention</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>money for game</i>
<i>Giving a presentation to my class</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>money for game</i>
<i>Making a speech in front of a large group</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>money for game</i>






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STEP 3: Do challenges and record your progress

At the beginning of each challenge, use the Anxiety Scale to rate your anxiety. Your goal is to **stay in the scary situation until your anxiety naturally comes down on its own**. Every so often through the challenge, re-rate your anxiety. You can stop the challenge when your anxiety has come down significantly (at least halfway). Unless a challenge is much too difficult or you get really stuck, try not to use coping skills. When the same challenge causes less *starting* anxiety, you'll know you're ready to move on to the next challenge.

Date	Challenges That Trigger Your Fear	Anxiety At:		Anxiety Scale
		Start	End	
May 3	Ordering food or drink from a cashier	2	1	10 panic
May 4	Ordering food or drink from a cashier	1	1	9 
May 5	Raising my hand and answering a question in class	1	1	8 fearful
May 6	Making a phone call	5	2	7 
May 7	Making a phone call	4	1	6 afraid
May 8	Making a phone call	2	1	5 
May 9	Making small talk on the bus	7	6	4 worried
May 10	Making small talk on the bus	5	2	3 
May 11	Making small talk on the bus	3	1	2 okay
May 12	Making small talk on the bus	2	1	1 
May 13	Raising my voice to get someone's attention	6	2	

As you work through the challenges, use these spaces to reflect and adjust if needed.

How does it feel to "wait out" anxiety?	Do any of the challenges need to be adjusted?	Are rewards and coping skills (if necessary) working?
<p><i>It was really hard at first and didn't feel natural. After a couple of challenges, I think I got the hang of it though.</i></p>	<p><i>May 9: I tried talking to a stranger on the bus and got way too overwhelmed.</i></p> <p><i>May 10: talking to someone familiar on the bus worked better.</i></p>	<p><i>May 9: needed to use coping skills on the bus. Deep breathing worked okay, but listening to music worked better.</i></p>

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OPTIONAL: Draw Your Fear or Progress Bar

If you'd like, draw your fear. As you complete each challenge, cover the fear with a sticker. As the challenges add up, your fear will be slowly covered up and defeated.



You might also enjoy creating a progress chart similar to an Experience Points (XP) bar in a videogame. For each challenge, color in a section and watch your progress grow.

Challenge Progress Bar



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STEP 2: List smaller challenges that are related to your primary fear

STEP 3: Rate these challenges with the Anxiety Scale

Challenges That Trigger Your Fear	Anxiety Level

Anxiety Scale

10 panic



8 fearful



6 afraid



4 worried



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STEP 4: Prepare for challenges

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STEP 5: Plan your challenges and rewards, starting with the least scary

Challenges That Trigger Your Fear	Anxiety Level	Reward Per Try
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May 3				10 panic
May 4				9 
May 5				8 fearful
May 6				7 
May 7				6 afraid
May 8				5 
May 9				4 worried
May 10				3 
May 11				2 okay
May 12				1 
May 13				

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My Fear

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Challenge Progress Bar

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Additional Resources to Support Your Mental Health Journey

It can be hard to know where to begin looking for support in your mental health journey. Getting a referral from a primary care physician is a reliable first step. Also, sometimes family and friends have experienced similar issues and have professionals they would recommend. The experts at ChoosingTherapy.com are here to help as well, with resources we have reviewed and recommend. Our [strict editorial standards](#) ensure our reviews are fair, honest, thorough, and based on firsthand experience.

You Can Trust ChoosingTherapy.com



325+
Companies Reviewed



3,625+
Hours of Firsthand Experience



1,545+
Data Points Analyzed



[Best Online Therapy Platforms for Teens](#)

Online therapy is a convenient way to connect with a licensed therapist to address mental health issues, reduce unhealthy behaviors, develop effective coping skills, and get more satisfaction out of life. Many companies accept insurance and most have next-day appointments available.

[Best Online Psychiatry](#)

Online psychiatry providers enable patients to consult with licensed psychiatrists and other mental health professionals. They can evaluate, diagnose, and prescribe medication to help manage mental health issues. Many companies accept insurance and most have next-day appointments available.



[Best Mental Health Apps](#)

Apps can be great way to monitor mood, track sleep, journal, and practice healthy coping skills like mindfulness and meditation. There are apps specifically designed to help people reduce the symptoms of depression, anxiety, ADHD, chronic stress, and burnout.

[Therapist Directory](#)

When you're looking for a mental health provider with a very particular skill set, level of experience, or personality type, a therapist directory can be very helpful. Using the filters, you can refine your search until you find a therapist who feels like a perfect fit.

