

LEARNING HOW TO COPE WITH FEAR

GOALS:

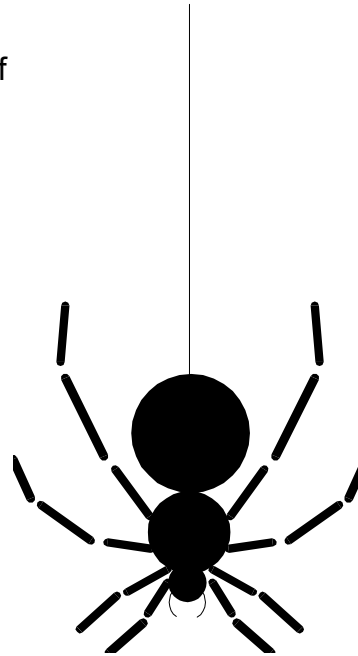
- To examine our fears and how we react to them.
- To learn what skills are needed in order to deal with our fears in a healthy way.

RATIONALE:

Fear and anxiety are a natural part of our lives. We usually experience fear when we are frustrated, when our self-esteem is threatened, or when we feel pressure to perform beyond our perceived capability. Unhealthy fear is paralysing; healthy fear is mobilizing. This lesson helps participants become aware of the fears that paralyse them and offers some practical skills in coping with them.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

Flipchart, markers, paper, pencils, a copy of *'Examining our Fears' Action Plan* for each participant, blindfolds.



METHOD:

Warm Up 1: Trust Walk

Instruct participants to pair up and take each other on a silent blind walk. One person puts on a blindfold (closed eyes will do if no blindfolds are available). The other person acts as a guide and leads the 'blind person' around the room providing a variety of experiences; for example: feeling, smelling, hearing. Neither partner may talk. Have partners reverse roles.

Questions to consider:

- How did you feel being led/leading?
- Did you feel uneasy or fearful at any point during the exercise?
- What did you learn from this experience?

Warm Up 2: Fear

What words come to mind when you think of FEAR? Write words on the flipchart and invite discussion from the total group around these words.

Exercise 1: Rating My Fears

Instruct participants to write down their three answers to the question:

I am afraid when

Ask participants to prioritize these answers from most to least fearful.

In small groups, encourage participants to share this information and look at the feelings it provokes.

Exercise 2: Analyzing My Fears

Ask participants to keep in mind the fear they prioritized as number 1 in the previous exercise. Explain how participants should rate themselves when responding to the questions below.

RATING:

1

10

Insignificantly

Excessively

Note: You may wish to simplify the terms used on this scale to suit the group.

Questions to consider:

Rating:

- Does your fear hamper your movements outside your home? _____
- Does your fear restrict your leisure activities with your family? _____
- Does your fear interfere with your social activities? _____
- Does your fear interfere with your daily work (housework) activities? _____
- Does your fear hamper you from taking a job or advancing in your job? _____
- How would you rate yourself about things that you would like to do, or try, which you don't do because of your fear? _____

Encourage participants to share their answers in small groups and discuss what they learned.

Theory : See Theory Box.

Exercise 3: Coping With Fear

In the large group, brainstorm ways in which you might deal with your fear. Flipchart results.

Exercise 4: Action Plan

Defense mechanisms are often used to avoid facing our fears. This exercise provides participants with a five step action plan. This plan can help overcome an immobilizing fear.

Distribute a copy of the ***Action Plan*** to each participant. You may wish to ask for a volunteer or use an example to demonstrate how the ***Action Plan*** is used.

EVALUATION:

THEORY BOX

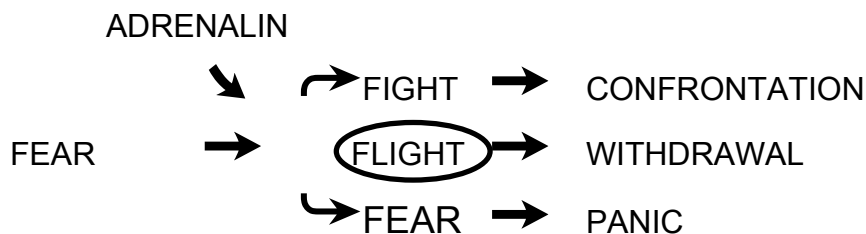
DEFINITION: **Fear** - "anxiety caused by real or possible danger, pain, etc.; fright, apprehension; concern." (*Websters Dictionary*)

FACTS:

- Fear is a natural part of life.
- Fear is a normal reaction to danger.
- Unhealthy fear is paralyzing.
- Healthy fear is mobilizing.

A child can overcome the fear of failing because of the healthy impetus towards growth. In this sense, fear can be a motivating force. Unfortunately, for many of us, fear is a negative feeling and, in some cases, paralyzes us and restricts our growth.

Fear causes anxiety, stress, anger. We can become fearful of fear.



By confronting or examining our fears and conflicts and trying to understand them, we make the first step in overcoming them. If we withdraw, we can become depressed.

Women often find confronting fear directly difficult because they have been socialized to let men protect them and give direction.

A common way of dealing with fear is to use defense mechanisms such as denial, rationalization and repression. This will not really solve the problem but will delay working on it. We can become aware when we are employing these protective techniques. This awareness will also allow us to see our fear more clearly.

Overcoming our crippling fears becomes possible when we learn to rely on our sense of self rather than on defense mechanisms.

We need to recognize in ourselves that we are not helpless. We can be in control of our emotions and find better ways to face life.

EXAMINING OUR FEARS ACTION PLAN

STEP 1: State the fear I have identified.

STEP 2: Have I faced up to this fear by talking about it?
With whom have I discussed it?

STEP 3: Buddy System - Who can I get to help me in overcoming my fear?

STEP 4: Binding agreement - What contract can I make with myself or with my buddy? What can I do and when can I do it? Penalties and reward system. Write out a contract.

STEP 5: What am I doing day to day to help overcome my fear?

Day 1 -

Day 2 -

Day 3 -

Day 4 -

Day 5 -

Day 6 -

Day 7 -