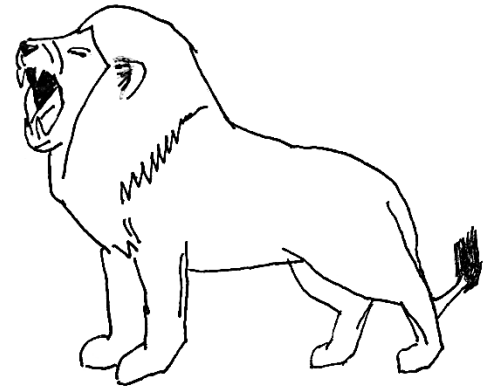
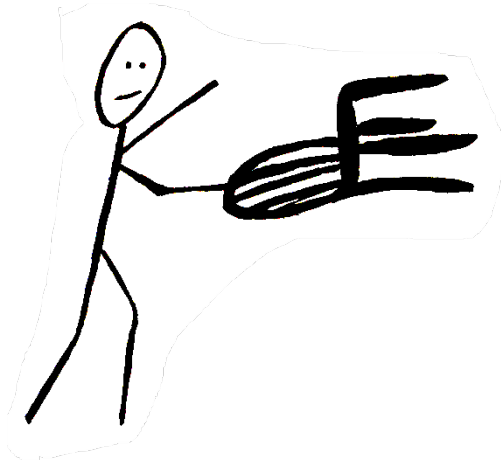


# First Approach Skills Training for Anxiety (FAST-A)

## Workbook for Teens



FAST-A is a brief program for youth (ages 7 to 17) with anxiety and their caregivers. It is meant to be your first step to overcoming problems with anxiety.

For some families, more support (such as a full course of cognitive-behavioral therapy, or certain medications) can also be helpful.

Nat Jungbluth, PhD  
Kendra Read, PhD  
Jennifer B. Blossom, PhD

*This workbook was made possible by funding from the WA State Healthcare Authority, as well as feedback and contributions from many generous colleagues. Special thanks to the dedicated primary care-based stakeholders across WA State who have piloted and contributed to the development of this program.*

## How to Use This Workbook

This workbook is intended for youths (ages 12 to 17) and their caregivers.

Below is the way most families work through the workbook (together with a healthcare provider, or on their own). If you want to move slower or faster that is totally fine.

### Meeting 1

Go through pages 3-18 together. Use page 18 to record what happens that week.

### Meeting 2

Go through pages 18-29. Use page 28 to record what happens that week.

### Meeting 3

Go through pages 30-32. Use page 32 to record practice over the next week.

### Meeting 4

Use pages 33-38. Use page 36 to record practice over the next week.

### After Meeting 4

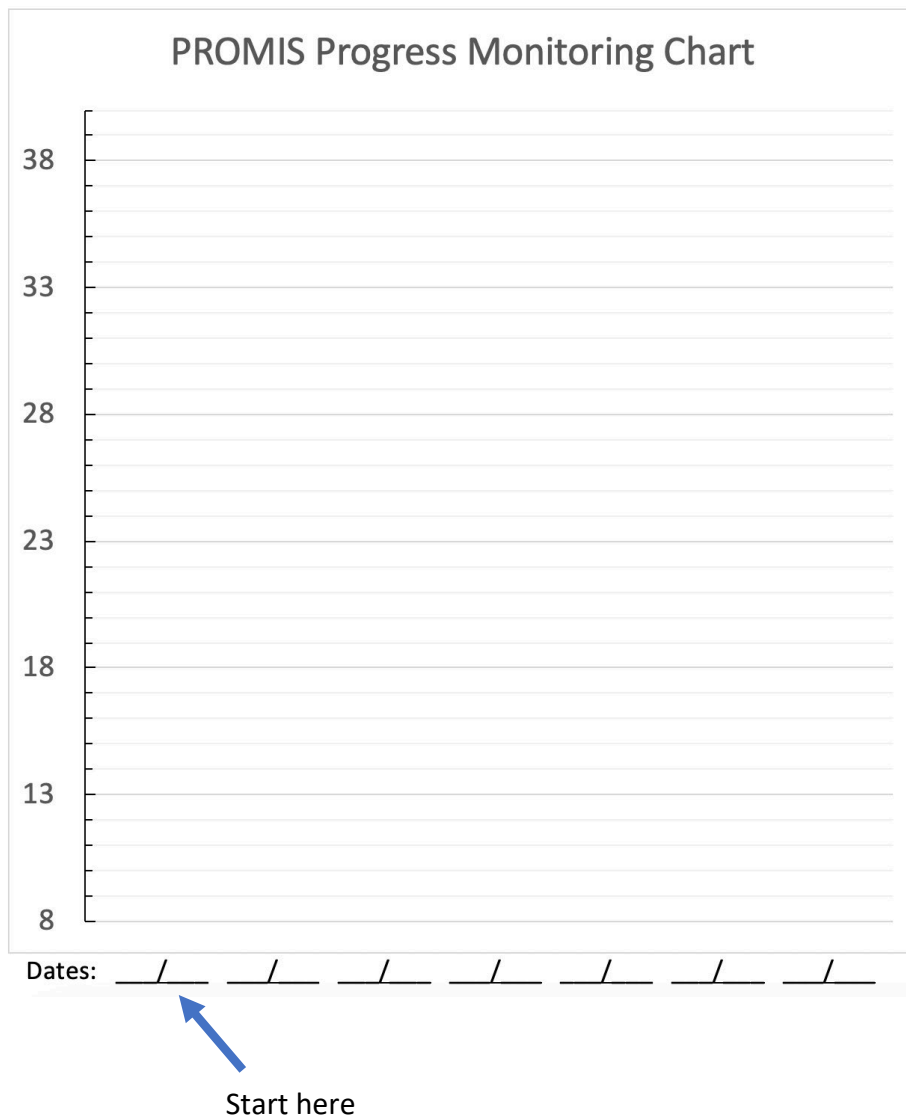
Continue to practice the skills independently, or with occasional check-ins with your healthcare provider. Use pages 39-40.

# Tracking Your Progress

As you go through this program, it helps to check in every couple of weeks to measure progress. Below is a chart you can use to see what happens to your anxiety over time.

We recommend using the PROMIS questionnaire (here is the [child/teen version](#), and here is the [parent/caregiver version](#)).

After you fill it out, write in the date below put a dot right above the date to show the score you got. You can label P for parent score and C or T for child or teen score if you want to track both.



## FAST-A Meeting 1

Check out the information below to learn about anxiety problems and how to overcome them!

### What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is a word for the uncomfortable feeling we all get when we think something bad might happen. It is a normal, natural feeling that everyone has.

Anxiety is often helpful, but sometimes it gets too strong and starts to interfere in our lives.

People use different words to describe anxiety, like *frightened*, *stressed*, *scared*, or *worried*. What words do you use?

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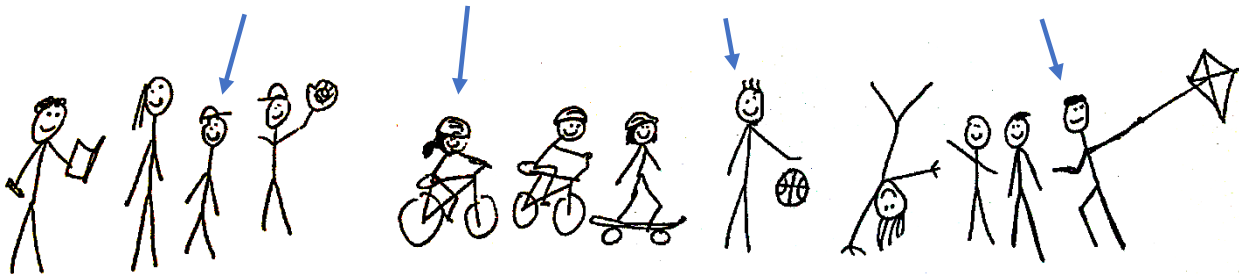
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### Did you know?

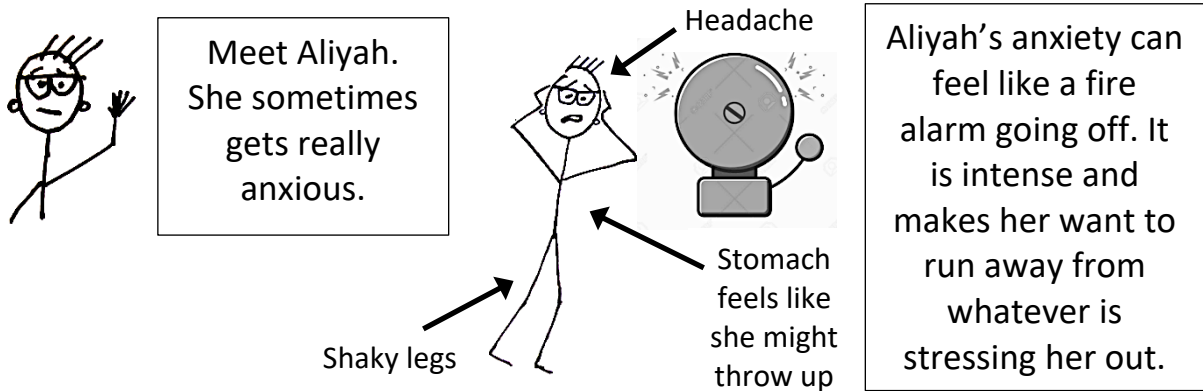
About **one in every three teens** has a big anxiety problem at some point...and **one in three adults** do too!

So, out of these 12 teens, about FOUR will have problems with anxiety at some point that keep them from doing things that matter to them.



Many famous people have struggled with anxiety! You probably even know a few, like Selena Gomez, Adele, Bill Heder, or Lady Gaga.

## Example: Aliyah Thinks Anxiety Sucks

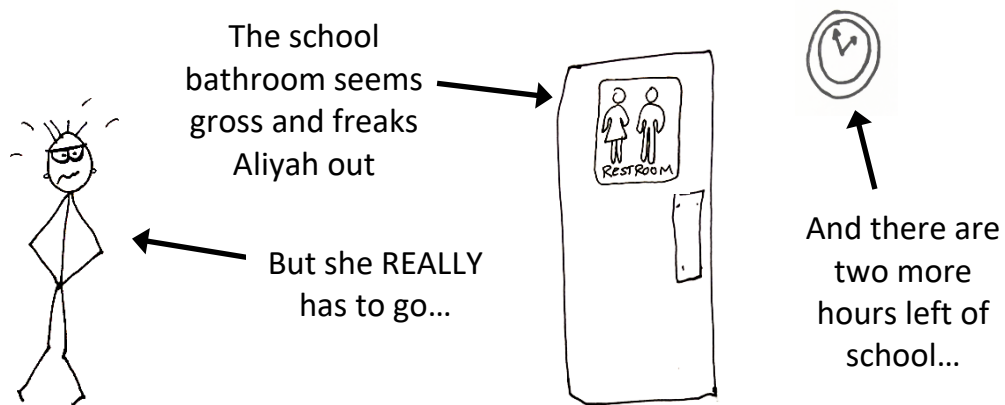


And Aliyah gets **3 kinds of anxious thoughts**:



1. Something bad is going to happen!
2. It would be TERRIBLE.
3. I couldn't handle it!

And Aliyah's anxiety often shows up when it's really...not fun...



If anxiety is such a pain, why do we even have it?  
Learn what it's good for on the next pages.

# What is the **Stress Boost** response?

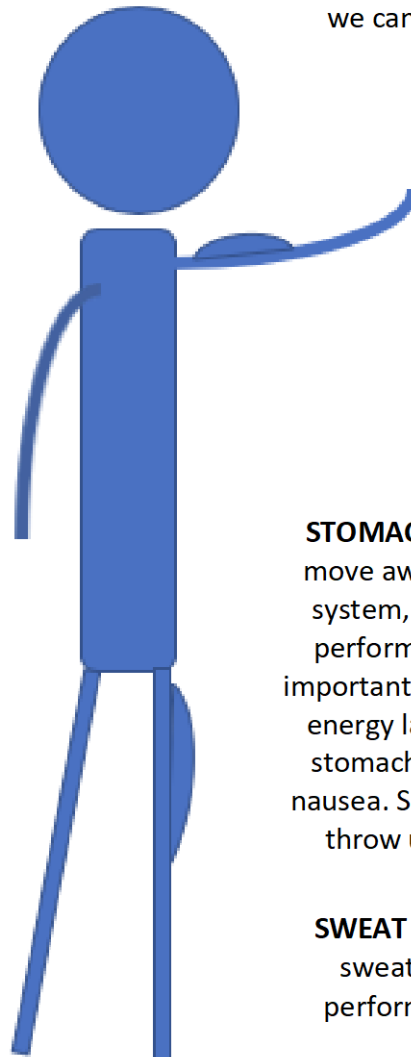
When we feel **anxious, excited** or **in danger** our body gets a **BOOST**.

**HEAD** - Our brain turns on the stress boost system when it notices danger or challenges. Sometimes people get headaches when anxious.

**BREATHING** - Our lungs may breathe faster to get extra oxygen to our brain and muscles. We might feel a little dizzy from extra oxygen.

**HEART** - Our heart may beat faster, to get extra blood, oxygen and energy to our brain and big muscles so they are stronger and faster.

**SKIN** - Blood often moves away from the surface of our body, and our hands and feet, which is good if we get injured. It can make our skin feel cold or tingly, and we might look pale.



**EYES** - Our eyes may open wider to let in more light, so we can better spot danger.

**MUSCLES** - Extra blood and energy flows to our big muscles to help us fight or escape danger. Our muscles can feel tense and a bit shaky from the boost of energy and blood sugar.

**STOMACH** - Blood and energy move away from our digestive system, because survival and performance **NOW** are more important than digesting food for energy later. This can feel like stomachaches, butterflies, or nausea. Sometimes people even throw up or have diarrhea.

**SWEAT** - Our skin often gets sweaty, to help our high performance body cool off

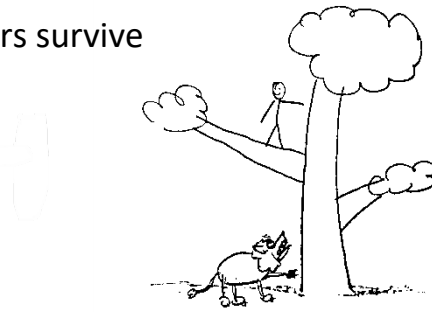
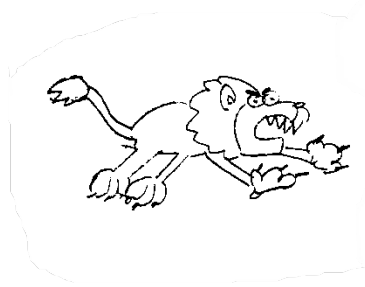
**These changes are not dangerous and are often helpful!**

Your job is not to get *rid* of anxious feelings, but to learn to do the things you need and want to do *anyway*. Doing this will help re-train your stress boost to only go off when you really need it.

**FUN  
FACT:**

Scientists call some of these changes the “fight, flight, freeze” response because they help animals fight, flee or freeze to get out of danger.

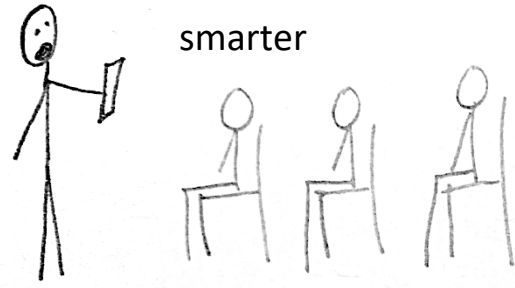
The **stress boost response** helped our ancestors survive



And it can make us faster



smarter

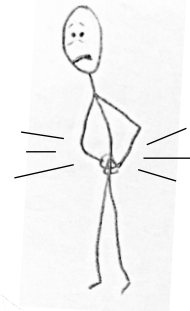


and safer

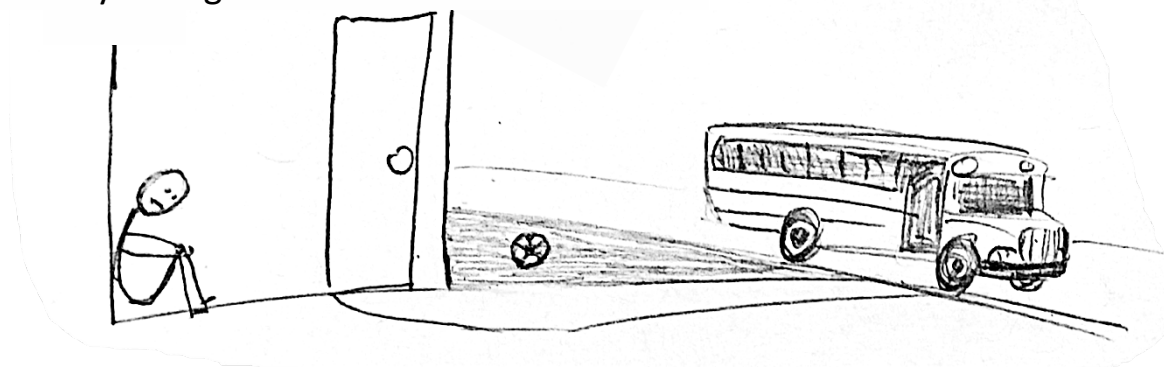
Yikes!  
That was close!



...even though it can often be uncomfortable



The stress boost can help us as long as we don't miss out on life by hiding from it.



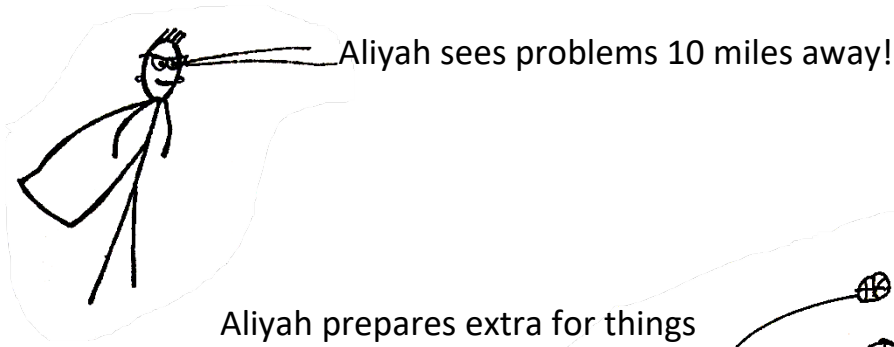
## Why do some people seem to get more anxious?

Sometimes having a strong stress boost system is like being a bit taller or having brown eyes. It's just a part of who we are. We can also get more stress boost and danger alert reactions after scary things happen to us.

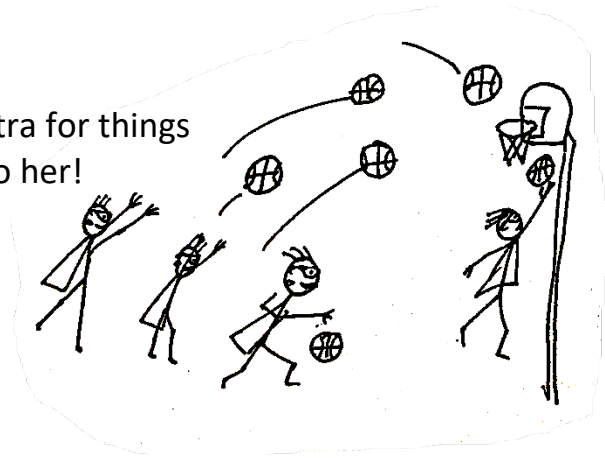
The cool thing is that having strong stress boost and danger alert systems can help us do extra well at things!



Remember Aliyah? Her stress boost and danger alert system is EXTRA strong. For her it sometimes works like having a super power...



Aliyah prepares extra for things that are important to her!



Aliyah gets her performance **boosted** in situations that matter!

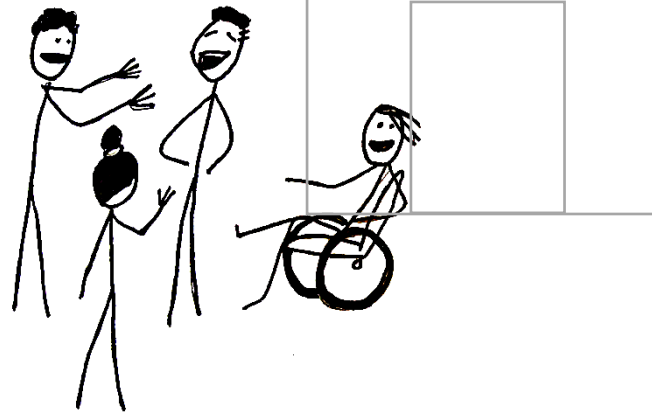




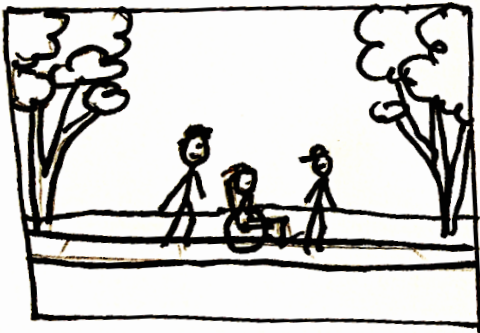
But other times Aliyah's danger alert system is too sensitive....



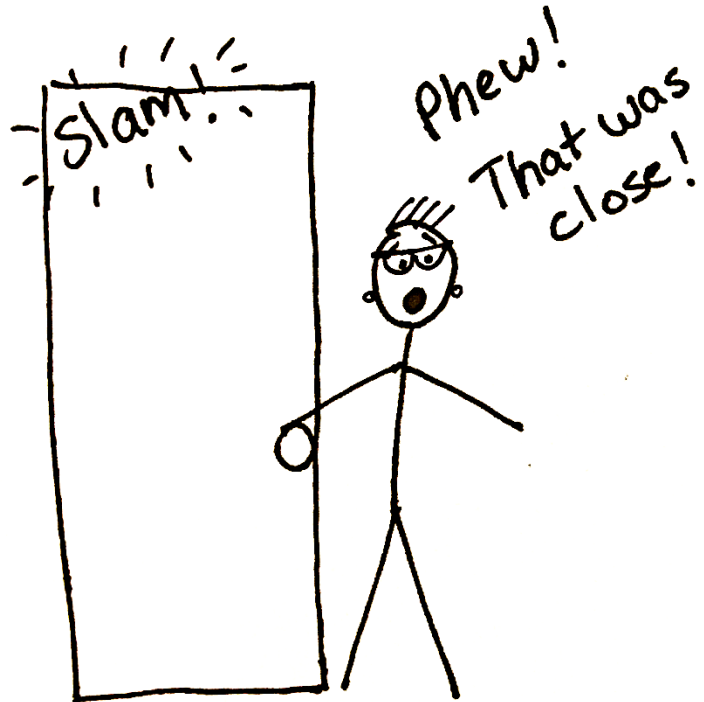
Aliyah's family moved and she had to start a new school. She wants to make friends but she is too anxious to even say hello.



When we stay away from normal situations that FEEL scary but are actually pretty safe...well, we usually feel a lot SAFER! We feel RELIEVED!



↑  
Teens Aliyah's age in front of her apartment



But over time, **avoiding normal situations** only makes us more scared of them.  
The situations we avoid begin to feel more and more dangerous!



The good news is there is a way **we can CHANGE** how scary things feel!

We can learn to **turn down the fear alarm** by slowly trying out the safe things we are scared of.

## What is “Exposure” or “Brave Practice”?

**Exposure** is a fancy word for facing our fears to turn down our anxiety. Some people call this “brave practice.”

To make things feel less dangerous, we just need **new experiences** to teach our brain and body we aren’t actually in great danger.

When we face our fears we learn:

- \* the bad thing we expect doesn’t usually happen!
  - \* the bad thing isn’t as bad as we thought
- OR...
- \* we handle it better than we thought we would.

That’s it.  
That’s brave practice.

Aliyah’s uncle tells her nobody gets to have friendship without paying the price of being nervous, embarrassed, awkward and rejected some of the time.

He says these things get easier with practice. And if things go okay the anxiety gets less and less with practice too.

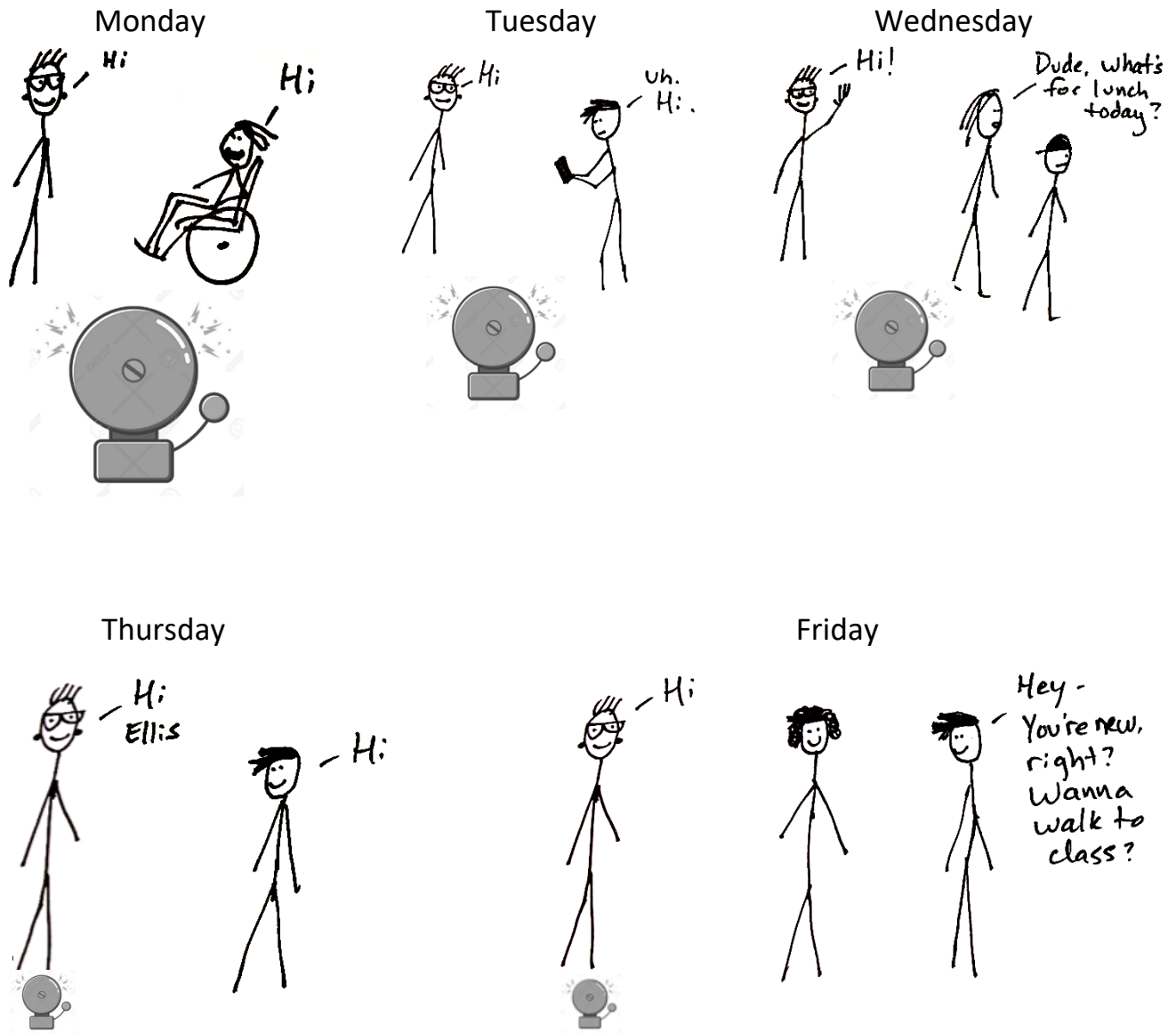
Aliyah decides to try being more social, even if it is hard and she makes some mistakes...



## How it works

The more times we face our fear and it turns out ok, the more our brain and body will settle down. We realize we can handle things. The fear alarm gets quieter.



Watch what happens to Aliyah's fear alarm when she practices looking right at people, smiling, and saying "Hi" every day for a week.



## But what if the danger is real?

Sometimes the thing we fear is something that could actually happen, or we need some **new SKILLS** or a **PLAN** to have things turn out OK.

Check out a few of these **common fears** and some ways that **skills and plans** can help people feel more brave.

	Dating	Think of how you will ask someone out Think of what you will talk about Responding to rejection (very common!)
	Bullying	Learn tips for responding to teasing Make a plan to steer clear of bullies Get help if you need it
	Failing a class	Get more support at school Learn study skills Get extra practice with the material
	Dangerous neighborhood or people	Make a plan to walk with friends Figure out which places are safe/not safe Plan what to do if something dangerous happens
	Making Friends	How to start conversations, make small talk, find common interests, or hang out. How to trade contact information
	Situations we don't know how to handle	Get good advice Practice what you'll say or do

Once we have a plan, or some new skills, we feel more brave.  
We can face our fears and our brain will learn:

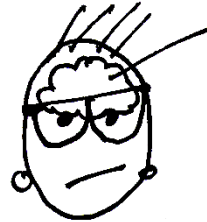
\* the bad thing isn't so likely

*or*

\* the bad thing isn't quite so bad

*or*

\* we can handle tough things like this



I guess this  
is O.K.  
My plan is  
working.

So, for each of your fears, we will ask:

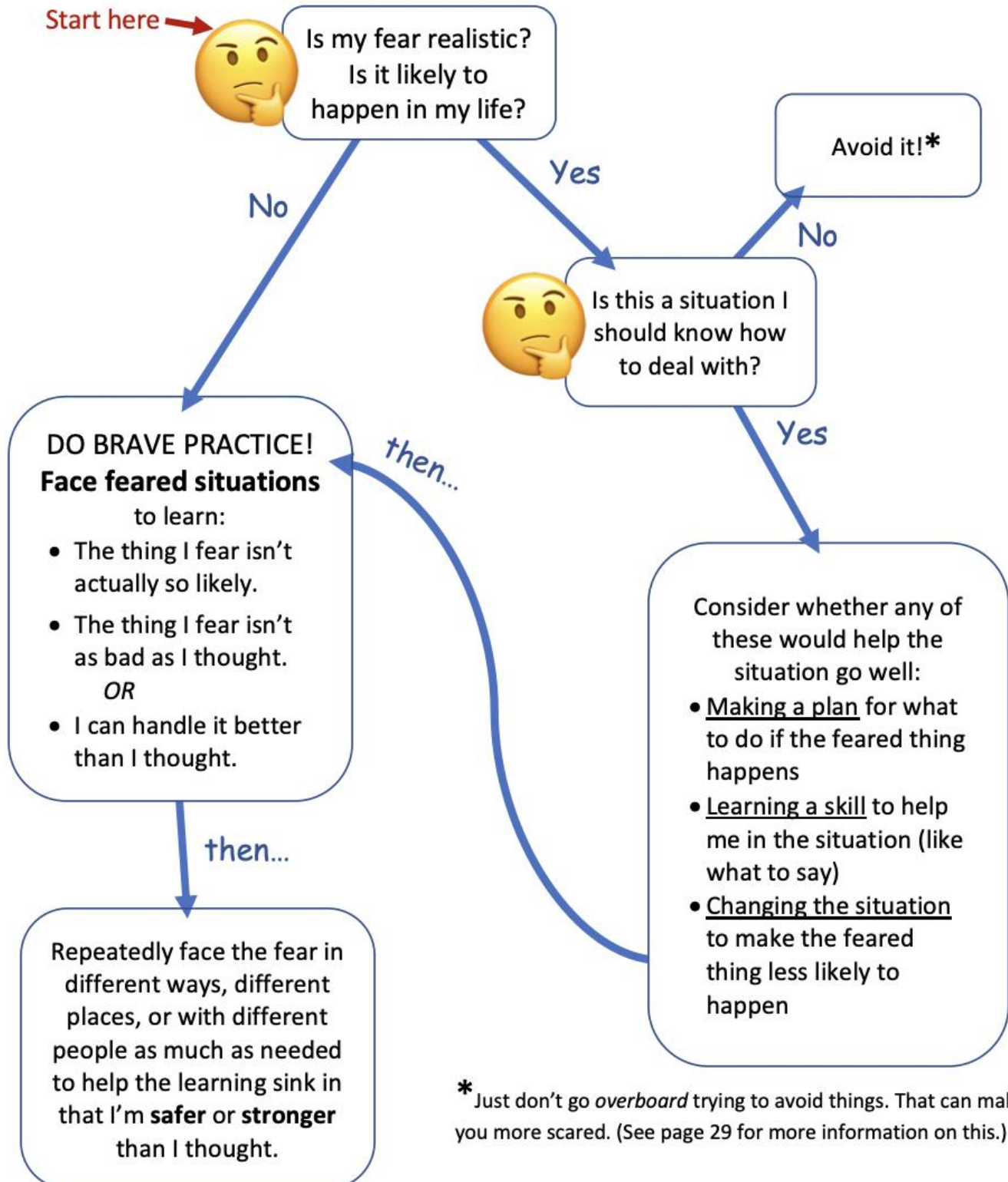
- Is this fear something that might really happen?
- Would some new skills or a plan help you face your fear, if you have to?

For any fear you want to conquer, use the guide on the next page to decide what to do...

Answer the questions and follow the paths for these two example fears:

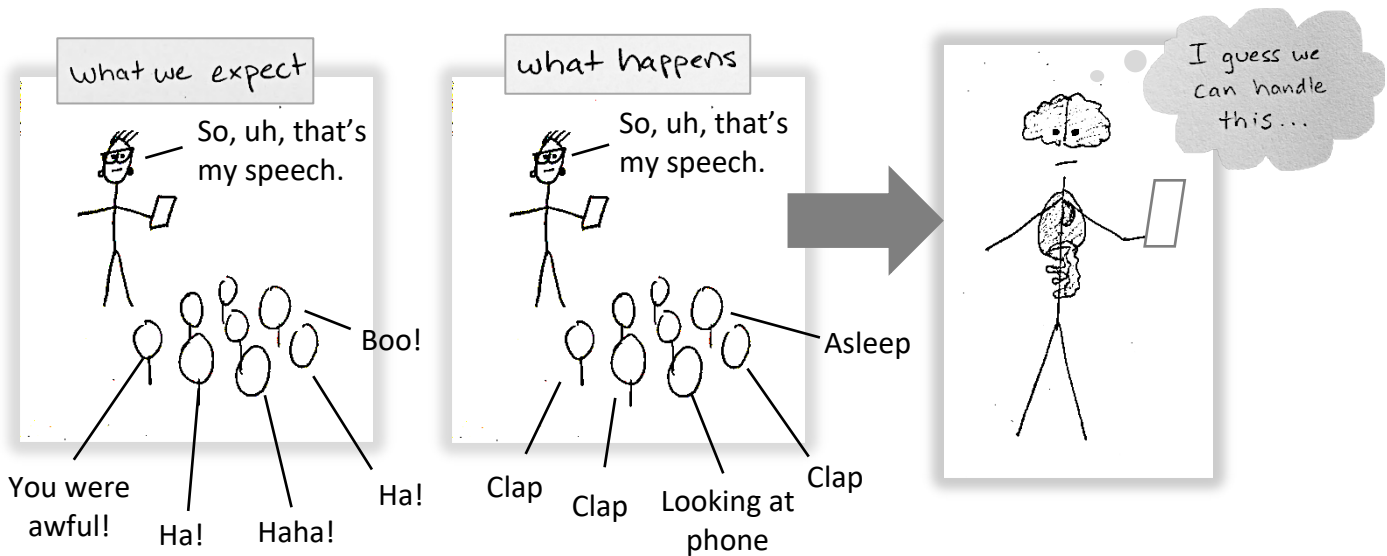
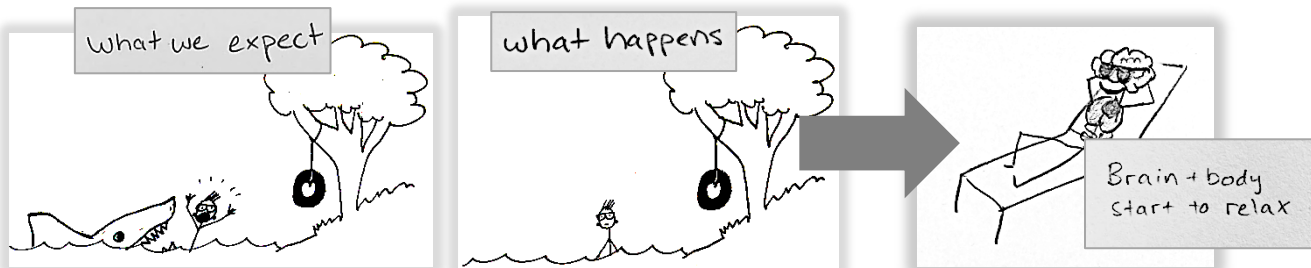
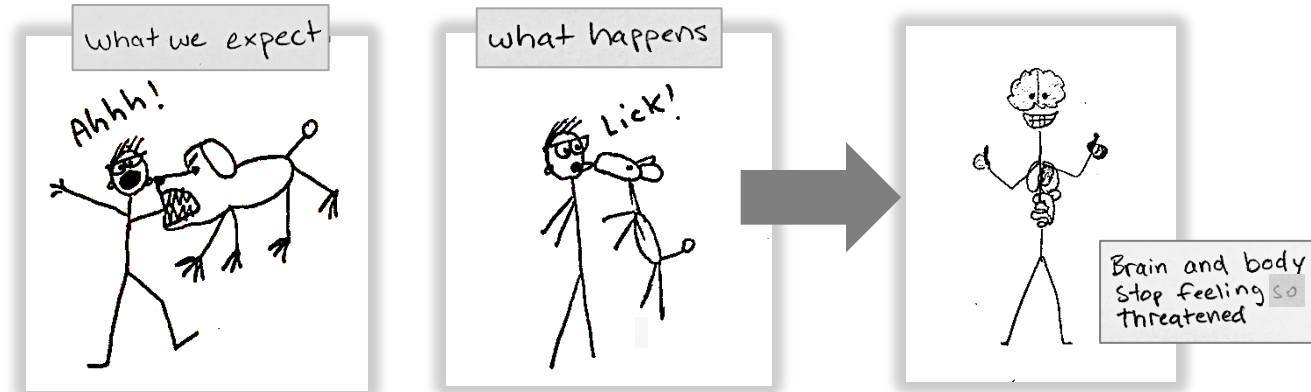
1. I'm terrified a shark will somehow be in the lake and eat me.
2. I'm worried I will bomb my speech and people will laugh at me.

## Guide for Overcoming Fears



Brave practice, or facing fears, changes our brain and body's threat alarm. All you have to do is have experiences that **don't match what you expect**.

The more you face your fear and things go ok, the more your brain and body will settle down.



Can you think of times when **real life didn't match your fears**?  
 When things you were scared of turned out better than you expected?  
 What happened to your anxiety?



## FAST-A Meeting 1 Summary:

- Anxiety is a normal feeling.
- Problems with anxiety are very common (about 1 in 3 people).
- Anxiety can help us do our best.
- Avoiding things, when they aren't actually dangerous, can lead to problems, including more anxiety and distress.
- You can change your body's fear reactions by facing fears (brave practice).
- You can face fears in small steps at first to make it easier.
- Sometimes when facing fears it is helpful to learn new skills or make a plan. Other times you can just go right ahead and face your fear.

The next 2 pages are for you to complete at home this week.  
In the next FAST-A meeting you will learn more about how brave practice works.

## At-Home Practice – Week 1



### Where is anxiety a problem for you?



Like ice cream, there are many different flavors of anxiety. Some flavors of anxiety will sound like what you struggle with, some will not. Many of these things would make most people anxious or worried. Check off the items that usually make you feel really upset or have started to get in the way of your life. **Put a star next to the things that would be extra important for you to work on. Use this information to set goals with your provider.**

#### Being away from family

- being apart from your parents or other caregivers, during the day or at night
- staying at school or in class

#### Social stuff

- worry that people might think something bad about you or laugh at you, or that you will be embarrassed
- speaking to new people
- answering questions in class
- eating or using a bathroom in public
- standing up for yourself

#### Worrying

- worrying that something bad might happen to you or the people that you love (health and safety)
- doing well enough in school or other activities (e.g., dance, music, sports)
- your future
- things going on in the world or in your community (e.g., politics, crime)
- natural disasters (e.g., earthquakes, tornadoes)
- family stress (e.g., divorce, finances)

- worry about little things that have happened in the past

#### Specific fears

- fear of specific animals (e.g., dogs, spiders, insects), heights, storms, the dark, vomiting, needles/shots, choking or something else very specific

#### Feelings in your body

- feeling anxious in your body (e.g., difficulty breathing, heart racing, feeling dizzy) out of the blue
- wanting to avoid places where you've felt anxious in your body before

#### Other stuff

- not making mistakes or being perfect
- thoughts about being contaminated by germs, dirt, or chemicals
- thoughts that are scary, violent, or sexual that make you feel really afraid
- worries that you might do something that you do not want to do
- things that you have to do repeatedly (washing, checking things, asking questions) or have to do in a certain order or routine to avoid feeling anxious

## At-Home Practice – Week 1

What are one or two goal areas you want to work on during this program? Think of times or places that anxiety currently gets in the way for you. Use the checklist above to get ideas.

Goal Area	How will life be different when I conquer this fear/worry?
1	
2	

To help track your progress, please rate how much you think anxiety problems are messing up your life right now, on a scale from 0 (not at all) to 10 (extremely):

Teen rating: \_\_\_\_\_ Parent/caregiver rating (about teen’s life): \_\_\_\_\_

Record how you notice anxiety showing up in your life this week:

Event or situation	What I worried might happen	How Anxious I felt (0-10)	What happened?

Caregivers, please also review the [FAST-A Caregiver Handout](#) from your provider.

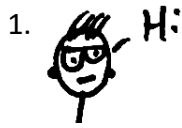
## FAST-A Meeting 2

1. Review your At-Home Practice sheets. Decide on the first Goal Area you will work on together.
2. Read the next section to learn the 4 tricks to make brave practice work best.
3. Use the “My Goal/Retrain Your Brain” worksheet to make a plan for reaching your goal.
4. Check out the Brave Practice Examples for Common Fears sheet to get ideas you can use.

## Four tricks to make brave practice work best

### 1. Start easy.

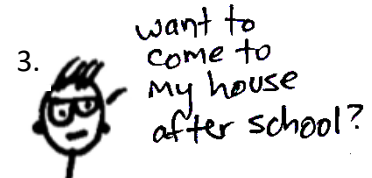
You don't have to face the really scary stuff right away. You can start with easier steps and move on to harder stuff.



Say "hi"



Give a compliment



Invite someone over

### 2. Choose the right practice.

Pick challenges that will help you with your goals and test out your specific fears. This sometimes means doing unusual things, like making mistakes on purpose, to see if what you fear really happens.

Aliyah worries people will tease her, so she spends way too much time fixing her hair and picking out clothes. She also avoids crowded places where people might notice her. Check out some of her brave practices:



Messed up hair at a public library



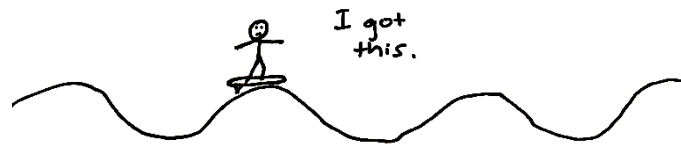
Strange clothes at coffee shop



Water spill on her shirt at school

During each brave practice, Aliyah pays attention to whether her fears are really true. (Do people notice? Do people tease her? Can she handle the discomfort? Can she cope with people's comments?)

The brave practices are hard at first, but only one person comments on the water spill and it's not a big deal.



### 3. Ride the anxiety waves.

When we face our fears, our anxiety usually goes up and down, like waves in the ocean. That's normal! In fact, having the anxiety go up and down when we face fears helps us learn.



Brave practice is also a lot like weightlifting or working out—when it feels hard, that is a sign you are getting a REALLY GOOD workout, and you are teaching your brain a lot.

### 4. Stay until you learn.



When we face our fears, it is important to **stay in the situation** long enough for our brain and body to **learn something new**.

Depending on the fear, this might be 5, 10 or even 30 minutes. If we get freaked out and run away, this doesn't help and can make our fears even bigger.

So, try to stay in the situation until you can tell your brain is learning:

*Maybe my fear isn't so likely*

*Maybe this isn't so bad*

*Maybe I can handle things like this.*

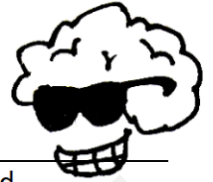


Usually you'll notice your stress level start to go down as your brain and body take in the new experience, but don't worry if it doesn't.

The next page is a sheet where you can get creative and think of lots of ways to face your fear. Try to think of some easy, medium and hard steps. Don't worry too much about doing the sheet perfectly. It is just a way to get you started coming up with some ideas.

My Goal: \_\_\_\_\_

(Hint: Pick something you'd like to be able to do if you can overcome your fear)



Below, write in some steps you could take to help your brain learn it doesn't need to feel so scared about doing your goal. Fill in 10-15 ways you can face your fear including some easy, medium and hard ones. (Check out the **Brave Practice Examples Sheets** for ideas!)

Harder Steps

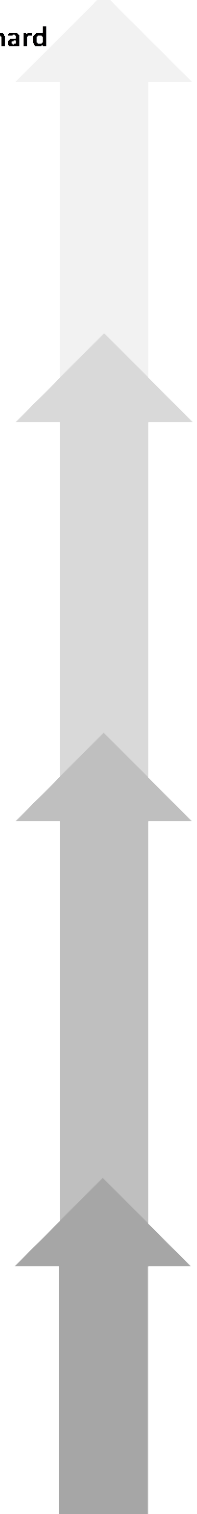


*PRO TRAINING TIP:  
Unlike lifting weights,  
for Brave Practice you  
can skip right to the  
harder workouts for  
faster results!*

Medium Steps



Easier Steps



Train Your Brain...with Brave Practice Workouts!

# My Goal: More able to talk to people at my new school

(Hint: Pick something you'd like to be able to do if you can overcome your fear)



Below, write in some steps you could take to help your brain learn it doesn't need to feel so scared about doing your goal. Fill in 10-15 ways you can face your fear including some easy, medium and hard ones. (Check out the **Brave Practice Examples Sheets** for ideas!)

## Harder Steps



Ask classmate about something they have (a phone, a shirt with a band or sports team name)

Sit with new people at a lunch table, join the conversation

Give someone a compliment

Ask classmate a question about a homework assignment

Ask someone at the grocery store if they have apples, while standing next to the apples

## Medium Steps



Take a walk around the cafeteria and nod at other students

Test myself: See how many classmates I can say "hi" to in a day!

When I walk into class, nod at other students

Take a walk around my neighborhood and say "hi" to people I see

Start a conversation with a young coffee shop or grocery cashier

Ask someone at the grocery store if they have apples

## Easier Steps



Walk around neighborhood and say "hi" and smile at people

Video call with a cousin my age I don't know well

Walk around neighborhood and nod to people I see

Call and place a food takeout order

Conversation with an adult relative I don't usually talk to. Keep it going 10 min even if it gets awkward.



# Train Your Brain...with Brave Practice Workouts!



(This is an extra copy for any other goals you want to work on in the future.)

**My Goal:** \_\_\_\_\_

(Hint: Pick something you'd like to be able to do if you can overcome your fear)

Below, write in some steps you could take to help your brain learn it doesn't need to feel so scared about doing your goal. Fill in 10-15 ways you can face your fear including some easy, medium and hard ones. (Check out the **Brave Practice Examples Sheets** for ideas!)



**Harder Steps**

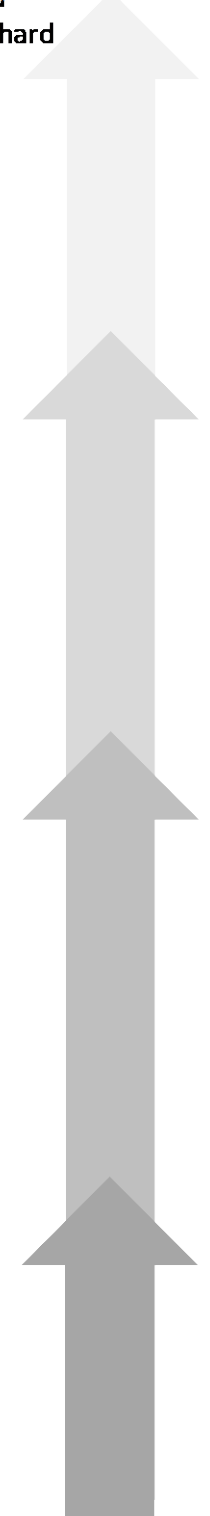


*PRO TRAINING TIP:  
Unlike lifting weights,  
for Brave Practice you  
can skip right to the  
harder workouts for  
faster results!*

**Medium Steps**



**Easier Steps**



**Train Your Brain...with Brave Practice Workouts!**

## Brave Practice Examples for Common Fears

Many of the following ideas come from [www.bravepracticeforkids.com](http://www.bravepracticeforkids.com). Visit [www.bravepracticeforkids.com](http://www.bravepracticeforkids.com) for more up to date resources on helping kids learn to manage their anxiety.

### Social Stuff

Ideas for in a Clinic	Ideas for Outside a Clinic	Helpful Tips
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Give a 1-minute presentation on random topics (earth-worms, your dog, pizza, the flu).</li><li>• Call a restaurant and ask what is on the menu.</li><li>• Text a friend about something you think they will like.</li><li>• Wear a silly hat and walk around the clinic building.</li><li>• Ask several people what time it is while wearing a watch.</li><li>• Post something boring or silly on social media. Don't check if it is liked.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Give a 1-minute presentation to your parents' friends</li><li>• Go to a public place (the mall, grocery store) &amp; tell people you are doing a survey. Ask their favorite ice cream flavor</li><li>• Introduce yourself to a new person in your building or neighborhood</li><li>• Go to a public place and sing happy birthday as loudly as you can.</li><li>• Answer a question in class when you're not sure you know the answer</li><li>• Delay checking social media</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• For everyone, the price of having relationships is occasional awkwardness, rejection, mistakes, and embarrassment. One goal of brave practice is learning you can handle those things. They get easier with practice!</li><li>• Sometimes it helps to learn new skills (like making small talk, joining group conversations, handling teasing).</li><li>• But often the best practice involves just being yourself, focusing on others, and staying in the present moment when you are interacting.</li></ul>

### Worrying

Ideas for In a Clinic	Ideas for Outside a Clinic	Helpful Tips
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Watch a news story about your worry (health, safety, crime, etc.).</li><li>• Write a story about the worst-case scenario you are imagining and read it repeatedly.</li><li>• Break a small rule like being 5 minutes late to class or turning in work a few hours late.</li><li>• Make mistakes on purpose.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Have caregivers change plans at the last minute, show up early or late.</li><li>• Take a walk with no destination and flip a coin to decide which direction to go</li><li>• Answer a question wrong on purpose (on homework, on a quiz).</li><li>• Practice not asking a parent if something bad is going to happen.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• For fears that are real, youths can learn skills or make a plan for if they happen.</li><li>• BUT, too much planning is often a SAFETY BEHAVIOR. Instead youths can practice living with uncertainty, doing things without a plan.</li><li>• Caregivers can work on giving less reassurance about worries.</li><li>• Teens can practice the skill of sitting with the uncomfortable feelings of not knowing what will happen.</li></ul>

## Being Away from Family

Ideas for in a Clinic	Ideas for Outside a Clinic	Helpful Tips
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Send caregivers on a walk or errand and talk about what you fear could happen, without calling or texting to check in.</li> <li>• Spend time alone in a room, gradually increasing time.</li> <li>• Have caregiver leave session and return later than expected.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gradually increase space (and time!) apart in the house (different rooms, different floors).</li> <li>• Have a caregiver run an errand while you stay at home.</li> <li>• Have playdates, sleep overs.</li> <li>• Practice sleeping independently</li> <li>• Practice not checking in on your parents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teens can learn skills for sad feelings during separation (distraction, getting support of a teacher).</li> <li>• Safety behaviors like texting or calling to check on caregivers can be decreased, with rewards for sticking to the plan.</li> <li>• Caregivers can work on reducing reassurance about separation.</li> <li>• It can be helpful to learn other skills, like what to do if you get lost or need help and your caregiver isn't with you.</li> </ul>

## Specific Fears

(things like needles, vomit, blood, heights, spiders, other animals)

Ideas for in a Clinic	Ideas for Outside a Clinic	Helpful Tips
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look at a picture or watch a video of the feared object or situation (animal, needle, vomit, etc.)</li> <li>• Read or tell short stories about people encountering the feared object or situation.</li> <li>• Bring the feared thing into the room and gradually get closer to it.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take a trip to see the feared object or situation (go to a pet store, go to the doctor with a sibling, etc.).</li> <li>• Go on a scavenger hunt to find the feared object/animal.</li> <li>• Watch educational videos about the feared topic (flu shots, blood draws, high places, animals).</li> <li>• Look for and cut out any unnecessary safety behaviors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caregivers can work on reducing avoidance or accommodation about these fears (like asking family friends to put their dogs away when you come over).</li> <li>• Some people with fears about blood or needles will faint in the presence of blood or needles, or when talking about them. Practice <u>Applied Tension</u> to prevent fainting:  <a href="https://www.anxietycanada.com/sites/default/files/blood_and_needles.pdf">https://www.anxietycanada.com/sites/default/files/blood_and_needles.pdf</a></li> </ul>

## Feelings in Your Body

(fear of having panic attacks or other body feelings)

Ideas for in a Clinic	Ideas for Outside a Clinic	Helpful Tips
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do things that bring on your panic or body symptoms, to help teach your brain they aren't dangerous, like:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>⇒ Spin fast in an office chair (1 min);</li><li>⇒ breathe forcefully, fast and deep (1 min);</li><li>⇒ hold your nose and breathe through a straw (2 min);</li><li>⇒ hold your breath (30 sec);</li><li>⇒ high knees running in place (2 min);</li><li>⇒ put head between legs or lie down and relax and then sit up quickly (1 min);</li><li>⇒ put on several heavy sweatshirts and do jumping jacks; then combine exercises for best results!</li></ul></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do exercises that bring on your symptoms (see at left) in different places, in different combinations, with or without your caregiver or friends.</li><li>• Go to places or do activities that you fear could bring on panic or body symptoms.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• For many people with panic attacks or body symptoms that frighten them it is helpful to do bring on the feelings on purpose so you can test out your fears about them.</li><li>• It is also key to start going places and doing activities you've been avoiding for fear of getting panic or body symptoms. With practice you'll learn you can handle it.</li><li>• Decrease safety behaviors, like drinking water, keeping certain items nearby, staying near exits, or keeping phone or parent close by.</li></ul>

## Other Stuff

(including obsessive compulsive disorder)

Ideas for in a Clinic	Ideas for Outside a Clinic	Helpful Tips
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Go on a germs scavenger hunt (touch floors, door knobs, parts of a toilet) without washing hands.</li><li>• Break a rule without "confessing".</li><li>• Write your name with your non-dominant hand. No erasing or re-writing.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complete a ritual (compulsion) "just wrong" (do the opposite of what OCD says!)</li><li>• Avoid "checking" things (like door locks)</li><li>• Make a mess of your belongings</li><li>• Write a story about the thing you are scared you might do and reread it many times.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Obsessions are uncomfortable thoughts, feelings or images; Compulsions are the things you do over and over to get rid of or manage your obsessions.</li><li>• The solution is to do things that bring up obsessions, but NOT do the compulsions you normally do. This teaches your brain that obsessions can be tolerated, and compulsions aren't necessary.</li></ul>

## Week 2 At-Home Practice

If you haven't finished the My Goal/Re-train Your Brain sheet, make sure to do that for your next meeting.

Also, let's identify some **small rewards** you can earn for doing the hard work of completing **daily brave practices**. Good examples are small items, privileges, treats, or fun activities.

Write ideas in this box:

Sometimes families decide on bigger rewards that can be earned over time. Parents/caregivers can assign point values to each reward and teens can earn points by doing their brave practices. Harder brave practices can be worth more points!

Reward idea	Points to earn it

Just remember: The true reward is overcoming your anxiety! These rewards are just a bonus to recognize and encourage your hard work along the way.

Track how you notice anxiety in your life this week:

Event or situation	What I worried might happen	How anxious? (0-10)	What happened? Did I take any brave steps (big or small)?

## Week 2 At-Home Practice: What Are “Safety Behaviors”?

When people are really scared of a situation, sometimes they do things to feel more safe. Some things we do to feel safe are just **GOOD IDEAS**. Like wearing a seat belt in a car.



But some things we do to feel more safe are not really needed. We call these **SAFETY BEHAVIORS**. Like always wearing a helmet and safety goggles whenever you ride in a car...that’s too much.

Extra safety behaviors that we don’t really need to do are a form of **avoidance** and can keep our brain feeling anxious about situations that aren’t really that bad.

In the list below, circle the behaviors you think are **GOOD IDEAS** (just right) and cross out the behaviors you think are **SAFETY BEHAVIORS** (too much).

- Wearing a helmet when biking or skateboarding.
- Wearing a helmet while jogging.
- Staying out of the kitchen because knives are dangerous.
- Spending three times as long as your classmates on homework to be sure it’s perfect.
- Washing your hands before eating a meal to keep from getting sick.
- Making detailed plans for exactly what you will say when talking to a friend.
- Keeping your phone with you at all times in case of emergencies.
- Checking that doors are locked three times before bed.
- Only posting pictures on social media that are perfect, or edited.
- Avoiding certain foods or activities in case they could somehow make you throw up.
- Repeatedly checking your social media posts to make sure enough people liked it.
- Checking again and again for spiders around you to make sure none will “get” you.
- Checking with your friends about what you do, what you wear, who you hang out with, to make sure they approve.
- Asking your caregivers the same question repeatedly.

List any things you do that might be safety behaviors:

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During the FAST-A program, as you face your fears, keep an eye out for “safety behaviors” you might be doing that actually keep you from learning that situations are safe or tolerable. Stopping safety behaviors can feel scary at first, but you will feel braver if you do.

If you aren’t sure whether something is a safety behavior or just a good idea, check with your caregiver or health care provider to see what they think.

### FAST-A Meeting 3

1. Review your Week 2 At-Home Practice Sheets. Have you identified some rewards you can use?
2. Next, figure out a brave practice that you can do together in the meeting today. Feel free to start on the easier side to begin with, but remember that harder exposures help you reach your goal faster!
3. Remember to use the decision tree on page 14 if you think you might need to learn new skills, make a plan, or change the situation in some way to help make your brave practice a success.
4. Use the Doing Brave Practice worksheet to help with your first brave practice.
5. Lastly, use the At-Home Brave Practice Tracking Sheet to plan and then track your brave practices and rewards for the coming week.

# Doing Brave Practice Worksheet

Brave practice means facing fears to overcome them. Being afraid, anxious or worried when it is not dangerous can get in the way. When you face fears on purpose, you learn 1) your worst fears are not likely to happen, 2) they aren't as bad as you expected, or 3) you can handle it. Avoiding fears makes them grow, but facing fears shrinks them.

## Before you start:

List exactly what you will do to face your fear. (Be specific about your goals—what will you do and for how long.)

What are you afraid will happen if you do this? (Be specific.)

How high do you think your anxiety will get (0-10)?

What is a reward you can have for facing your fear successfully?

## After you finish:

Were you able to face your fears?

How did your experience compare to what you were afraid would happen? What surprised you?

What did you learn? What evidence do you have that you can handle the situation?

How high did your anxiety get? Rate on a scale from 0 (totally calm, no anxiety) to 10 (the most anxious you've ever been).



### At-Home Brave Practice Tracking Sheet

Date	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
What I will practice:							
My reward for practicing:							
Highest anxiety rating (0-10)							
What did you notice?							

At the end of the week, please rate how much you think anxiety problems are messing up your life right now, on a scale from 0 (not at all) to 10 (extremely):    Youth rating: \_\_\_\_\_    Parent/caregiver rating (about youth's life): \_\_\_\_\_

### FAST-A Meeting 4+

1. Review your Home Brave Practice Tracking Sheet.
2. Use the Weekly Parent/Caregiver Agenda for Continuing Brave Practice and Doing Brave Practice and At-Home Brave Practice Tracking Sheet to guide today's meeting and next steps.
3. If there is time, check out the Relapse Prevention Handout to learn how to keep anxiety in check once you've overcome it.

### FAST-A - After Today's Meeting

1. If you've been doing FAST-A meetings with a healthcare provider, talk with them about whether you should continue to check in, in person or by telephone.
2. Schedule regular meetings on your own, just you and parent/caregiver, to plan and carry out brave practices that can help you feel braver in your life.
3. Work your way up toward your goals. Do brave practice in different ways until your brain catches on, until you can do all the things you want to in your life without anxiety stopping you.
4. Keep practicing together! Anxiety has a way of showing up again in the future... so always be ready to tackle your fears with more brave practice!

# Weekly Parent/Caregiver Agenda for Continuing Brave Practice

- 1) **Review the past week's brave practice.** Praise successes and ask questions to solidify what was learned:  
Example questions:
  - a. *What did you learn from your practice?*
  - b. *Did the things you feared actually happen?*
  - c. *Was there any evidence your fears were not accurate?*
  - d. *Was there any evidence you can handle situations like this?*
- 2) **Rewards.** Make sure you are up to date with giving out rewards/points that have been earned.
- 3) **Make sure we are on the right track.** Are we working on the right things? Are there other important fears or goals we need to address? Are the rewards still motivating?
- 4) **Identify a brave practice for today.** If it helps, you can use the Doing Brave Practice Worksheet to plan it.
- 5) **Support the Brave Practice.** Remember to:
  - a. Validate (*"I know this is hard/scary"*).
  - b. Show confidence (*"You can do this"*).
  - c. Encourage (*"You are doing great" "I am so proud of you"*).
  - d. Look out for safety behaviors (ways the youth might be avoiding or distracting themselves during brave practice) and encourage them to try giving them up.
  - e. If the brave practice allows for it, ask questions DURING the practice to help with learning:  
Example questions:
    - i. *What are you noticing about the situation?*
    - ii. *What is your anxiety like, in your body?*
    - iii. *What does your anxiety want you to do? What ways are you tempted to avoid?*
    - iv. *What are you going to do instead? Why?*
    - v. *What are you learning so far?*
    - vi. *How does this compare to what you expected?*
- 6) **Use the Doing Brave Practice Worksheet.** Record what happened and what was learned.
- 7) **Use the At-Home Brave Practice Tracking Worksheet.** Make a plan for daily practice in the coming week.
- 8) **Schedule the next caregiver and youth Brave Practice planning meeting.** Meetings should happen at least weekly, or more often for faster progress.

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## At-Home Brave Practice Tracking Sheet

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# Relapse Prevention Handout

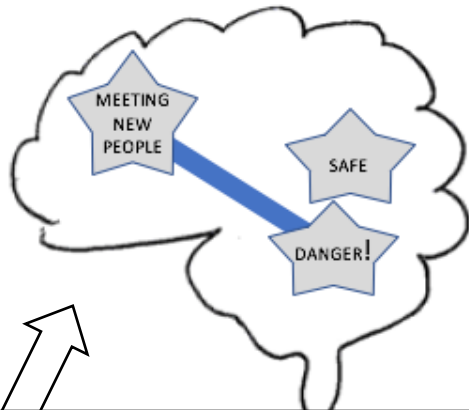
*Relapse prevention* means keeping your anxiety problems from coming back. Even if you're not quite done tackling your anxiety problems, you might have questions about what happens after you succeed. Read on to find out!

## How do I know when I have overcome my anxiety problem?

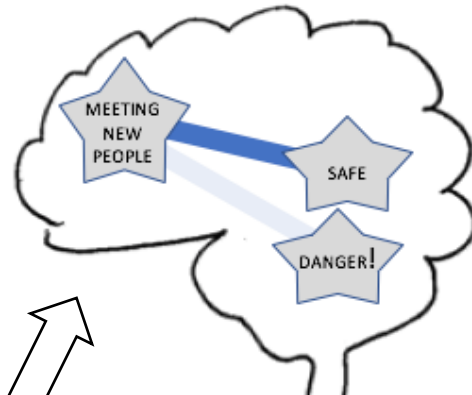
You have overcome your anxiety problem when you stop having really big fear reactions most of the time in normal situations. Of course you will still feel anxious about stressful or important things, and you will still have big anxiety reactions sometimes. The most important sign of success is that you have learned how to do what matters to you, and you live your life the way you want to, even if big or small anxiety shows up.

## Will my anxiety come back?

Sometimes people overcome their fears, only to have the fear spring back up later on. Why does this happen and what can you do about it? Check out these illustrations to find out.



Here is Aliyah's brain **BEFORE** doing brave practice. There is a strong connection between *meeting new people* and *danger*.



And here is Aliyah's brain **AFTER** lots of brave practice. There is a new connection between *meeting new people* and *safe*. The old connection is still in there but it's no longer in charge.

As long as Aliyah keeps practicing, she will continue to feel safer about meeting new people.

If Aliyah stops practicing (like for example during a pandemic!) or if she has a bad experience with meeting new people, that old connection can become the stronger one and her fear will come back. But it's OK! A bit of extra practice with meeting new people should restore the safety connection. Practicing will teach her brain that bad things are unlikely to happen, and if something bad does happen she can handle it.

*(continued on next page)*

**What about other fears?**

People with a big fear response about one thing in life are more likely to have big fear responses about other things. You can apply your brave practice skills to any situation where your fear is stopping you from doing things you need or want to do.

**Planning ahead**

Answer the questions below to make a plan to prevent anxiety problems from coming back later on.

**1) Identify future trigger situations**

Can you think of any events or situations that could cause your fears to come back? Someone who is really anxious about school might feel more anxious after a holiday break. Someone who has overcome a phobia of dogs might feel more anxious after hearing about someone bitten by a dog. What are changes or situations that could come up that might trigger a return of YOUR fears?

**2) Make a plan to be brave**

For any trigger situations you can think of, make a plan for how you can handle it. Is there any extra preparation or practice you can think of that will help you feel more confident?

**3) Remind yourself**

What are some things you can tell yourself if you find that you are getting too scared of normal situations in the future and you feel stuck?

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KEEP GOING!!  
DON'T STOP!

