MOOD & STRESS • CBT GRADED EXPOSURE

Social Courage & Exposure Hierarchy Ladder

Systematic desensitization ladder for social hesitation, group projects, and presentations.

CLINICAL INSTRUCTIONS: One line per step in your own words. Short, honest answers are easier to trust.

Participant Name: _____ **Date:** _____ **Target: 25m**

1 IDENTIFY THE OVERARCHING SOCIAL FEAR

Specify the core fear: 'Speaking up in tuition class', 'Answering calls from unknown numbers', or 'Eating alone in cafeteria.'

CLINICAL HINT: Vagueness fuels anxiety. Specificity makes fear conquerable.

2 RATE DISTRESS ON THE 0-10 SUDS SCALE

Define Subjective Units of Distress (SUDs): 0 = completely calm, 5 = noticeable tension, 10 = maximum panic.

CLINICAL HINT: Your rating is personal and valid. There is no right or wrong SUDs score.

3 BUILD THE 5-RUNG CHALLENGE LADDER

Write 5 graduated challenges from SUDs 3 (e.g., make eye contact and smile at teacher) to SUDs 9 (e.g., raise hand to ask a question).

CLINICAL HINT: Never start at the top. Master each rung 2–3 times before climbing higher.

4 TRACK HABITUATION & EXTINCTION

After each challenge, stay in the situation until anxiety naturally drops by 50%. Record: Expected anxiety vs. Real outcome.

CLINICAL HINT: Notice that catastrophic fears rarely happen, and even discomfort is survivable.