

Tips for Graded Exposure

Everyone is an individual, but generally speaking we want to:

- **Expose Anxiety, Accommodate Overstimulation**
 - Spend time exploring the client's experience. Are they anxious ("what if") about a situation, or dreading it because they **know** it will be uncomfortable? ("Too noisy, too hot").
- **You can't habituate to overstimulation**
 - After untangling the client's experience, problem solve the barriers outside of anxiety, including sensory aids.
- **Be careful with safety behaviours**
 - Some behaviours might *look* like they're safety behaviours, but may be because of genuine sensory needs. Explore the **function**.

Pace it slowly; more rest may be needed as well as sensory regulation time

Be creative with tools to aid sensory experience whilst not distracting from the anxiety

Ensure this is heavily **values led**- 'pick your anxiety battles'

Use a **visual** hierarchy chart of anxiety or SUDs



Remember the **4 rules of exposure** still apply- just be flexible

Use sticky metaphors to remind the client anxiety **isn't** dangerous

Psychoeducation is **key**, anxiety experience may be louder in ND, spend time ensuring client's understand what anxiety **is and isn't**

Give the client **language**, explain the difference between anxiety and overstimulation/dread