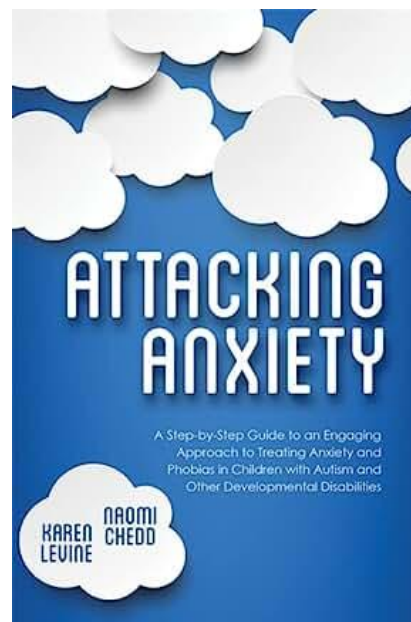


Book Study

Attacking Anxiety: A Step-by-Step Guide to an Engaging Approach to Treating Anxiety and Phobias in Children with Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities

Karen Levine and Naomi Chedd

Based on Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, this book shares a step-by-step enjoyable approach for addressing anxieties, fears, and phobias common in autistic children and teens. It provides scenarios including visiting medical professionals, managing transitions and changes, and tolerating mistakes. This model is designed to help family members, teachers, and therapists of autistic individuals successfully alleviate many of the anxieties and phobias that interfere with life enjoyment for the child/teen and the entire family.



Preface

pp. 9–13

1. Share some examples of how you have used role play with your child/students.

Chapter 1 What is a Phobia and How do Phobias Evolve Over Time?
pp. 15–35

1. Provide an example of where a fear/phobia of an autistic individual that you know has significantly impacted their quality of life. Explain why that fear/phobia may look different in a person with autism compared to their typically developing counterpart.

2. Identify why phobias are more common in children with ASD and some other developmental disabilities in comparison to neurotypically developing children.

3. Discuss the following statement from page 29: “If a child is unable to co-regulate due to neurological wiring, and to difficulties with understanding the language and nonverbal cues of family and friends, he/she will continue to respond to thunder fearfully.” Have you or someone you know experienced this type of fear? Share what that was like.

4. Which of the factors to reduce a child’s baseline anxiety (sleep, exercise, general well-being, relaxation/sensory diet, mindfulness, social engagement) have been helpful with your child or one of your students? How did it help?

Chapter 2 Overview of Phobia Treatment

pp. 37–47

1. Talk about why reassurance is not always reassuring. Share an example when someone tried to tell you, “Everything is ok”, and that phrase didn't help. How did that make you feel?

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2. Why are the flooding treatment approaches not the best for autistic individuals?

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3. Georgie has a fear of flowers. Describe how you might use role play, pretend play, or video modeling integrated into gradual exposure to help overcome the fear.
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Chapter 3 Gradual Exposure, Humor, and Interactive Play

pp. 49–57

1. Explain how humor can greatly reduce anxiety and have long lasting health benefits. Describe a situation where humor was used to help ease a student's anxiety in your classroom.

2. Some individuals may have a difficult time finding humor in situations that cause fear and anxiety. Using humor in treating fears and phobias or using humor in any therapeutic intervention needs to be taken very seriously and handled with extreme skill, care, and sensitivity. What should you do and not do to support this type of treatment approach?

3. How does incorporating interactive play provide more comfort for those experiencing anxiety and fears?

Chapter 4 Four-Step Treatment Model

pp. 59–73

1. Let's say that you have a student or family member who is clearly fearful of lady bugs. When this person sees the insect, they will run away and cry and struggle to calm down. Describe how you might unbundle the situation/ experience to understand why it is so upsetting to the individual.

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2. Think of a phobia that you have now or had at one time in your life. Which of the examples in the four-step treatment model would be or would have been most helpful for you? Explain why.
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Chapter 5 Treating Sophia's Phobia of Thunderstorms and Bugs

pp. 75–85

1. Explain why Sophia's therapist used music and art to desensitize her fear of thunderstorms and bugs.

2. Discuss how co-regulation helped calm Sophia while being gradually exposed to the sources of her fear.

3. Think of a student or family member who has a certain fear/phobia. Refer to Sophia's table on pp. 82-83 and devise your own table of the likely components of your student or family member's fear/phobia. Add possible activities to consider helping with treatment for the person's fear/phobia.

Chapter 6 Treating Will's Phobia of Environmental Sounds, Including Flushing Toilets, Hand Dryers, and Vacuum Cleaners

pp. 87–100

1. What accommodations have you tried for a person who is sensitive to sound? Discuss how the accommodations helped or didn't help and why.

2. Talk about why incorporating special interests and preferences into activities that are unpleasant or uncomfortable can be helpful for a person experiencing fear and anxiety.

3. Think of a situation where the gradual exposure process might benefit a person that you support with heightened sound sensitivity. Include action steps you might take to reduce anxiety and fear for that person.

4. In this chapter, we can agree that Will has a strong family support system. The family's creative involvement in helping to reduce his anxiety is exceptional. What happens when a student in your classroom does not have that type of family support? Discuss steps or measures you can still take to support a student like Will with sound sensitivities in your classroom.

Chapter 7 Treating Michael's Phobia of Injections and Blood Draws

pp. 101–112

1. Discuss the elements Michael's team identified related to the components contributing to Michael's phobia of getting his blood drawn. What might be some of the elements that contribute to a person's fear of getting a haircut? Determine strategies to consider when helping a person overcome the fear of getting a haircut.
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2. Michael's treatment team created new videos and found existing videos on the internet to help ease Michael's fear of getting lab work done. Review the [Autism Internet Module](http://www.autisminternetmodules.org) (www.autisminternetmodules.org) Video Modeling to learn why this practice matches well with autistic characteristics and strengths, and most importantly, how to plan, implement, and evaluate video modeling interventions.
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Chapter 8 Treating Jacob's Phobia of Losing Games and Not Being First

pp. 113–124

1. Jacob's team knew if they could get him to start playing games with a lower baseline anxiety, Jacob would have more tolerance for specific triggers. Discuss how this process might work for a student in your classroom who is fearful of making mistakes on assignments or tests. The stress and anxiety for this student begins as soon as an assignment is given, often resulting in extreme crying and trying to leave the classroom. How can you help the student decrease stress while increasing exposure to assignments?

2. Review the [Autism Internet Module](http://www.autisminternetmodules.org) (www.autisminternetmodules.org) Cognitive Behavioral Interventions (CBI), including case study examples. CBI focuses on teaching learners to monitor their own thought patterns and utilize specific CBI strategies to disrupt unhealthy thinking patterns that lead to undesirable emotions and behaviors.

3. Review the [Autism Center's Grab and Go Resource Gallery of Interventions](#). Which of the intervention examples might Jacob's team consider to support Jacob with the concept of winning vs. losing?

Chapter 9 Treating Li's Phobia of Clowns, Mascots, and People in Costumes

pp. 125–137

1. Discuss how Li's mother used Li's preferences and comforting items to gradually increase her exposure to her fears. Talk about how you might be able to incorporate special interests, preferences, and/or comforting items of an individual in your classroom or home to ease their fears.

2. Discuss the importance of incorporating co-regulation strategies with an individual who is experiencing extreme fear and anxiety.

3. Review the [Autism Internet Module](http://www.autisminternetmodules.org) (www.autisminternetmodules.org) on Using Special Interests in the Classroom. Learn how you might be able to embed special interests into interventions to increase desired behaviors.

Chapter 10 Treating Jordan's Phobia of Being Late

pp. 139–149

1. Discuss ways you have tried to calm a student or family member when they became anxious about being late for an event or activity. What worked and didn't work?

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2. Explain why setting up failure or disappointment for an individual is really in their best interest. Provide an example of a time when you did this purposefully for a person and what the results were.

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3. If Jordan was your family member or student, what additional strategies might you try to calm his fear and anxiety about missing the bus?
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Chapter 11 Collaborating with Others

pp. 151–162

1. Make a list of individuals you might collaborate with to help you desensitize an individual who is experiencing fear and phobia for the following:
 - a. Sensitivity to smells in a cafeteria
 - b. Afraid of the color yellow
 - c. Fearful of going to sleep
 - d. Afraid of losing their hair

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2. Using the list of examples above, what could be some possible trigger components of the feared object or situation? Describe how you might unbundle the situation/ experience to understand why it is so upsetting to the individual.

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3. Think of a phobia that one of your students or family members is currently dealing with. How can you incorporate it into their IEP? Discuss which area/category in the IEP you would add this type of information.
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Appendix

pp. 163–172

1. How do you plan to share the information you learned in this book with co-workers, family members, and/or individuals with phobias and fears?

2. The authors provided many examples of fears and phobias an individual with autism may experience. Were there any other fears/phobias that weren't mentioned in the book? How might you begin to unbundle the fear/phobia? List the steps you will need to take for gradual exposure.

For more resources to help you better support individuals with autism spectrum disorder, please visit OCALI's [Book Study Resources for Autism Focused Professional Learning Communities](#).