

7b5

## Taper Up

### Do

Encourage the person to gradually spend more and more time in the setting.

### Story

Diane has anxiety and depression with intense anxiety attacks when encountering people. She goes out very little but has to pick up her daughter from school. In the past she has asked others to do this or has taken an extremely long route to avoid people. She wants to conquer this. The supporter helps Diane make a plan. She will take different routes,

gradually increasing the number of people she encounters. She sticks with one route until her anxiety decreases and then changes the route to a busier one where she will encounter more people. Eventually Diane is able to take the most direct route, which means encountering the maximum number of people

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### Hints & Hazards

There may be many reasons why it might not be possible to stick rigidly to a plan. Diane might meet an unexpected crowd, her supporter might be unavailable sometimes or planned routes might be closed off. Build in some flexibility to the plan.

Tapering too quickly may increase anxiety or be overwhelming. Tapering up is part of the

approach used by behaviour therapists in desensitisation programmes (*Wolpe 1958*) where the person uses relaxation techniques as the anxiety-provoking stimulus is gradually increased.

The approach is also called Graded Exposure.