

Step ladder

Break a goal that feels out of reach into rungs you can climb.

Name _____

Date _____

The goal at the top

Specific enough that you would know when you got there.

The fear the ladder is testing

What do you predict will happen in these situations?

The rungs

List situations that would bring on the fear, from nearly easy to the goal itself, and rate each for the distress you expect, 0 to 100. Write the hardest at the top. Tick a circle each time you do a rung, and repeat it until it feels solid before moving up.

DISTRESS	SITUATION: WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, FOR HOW LONG	DONE
		○ ○ ○ ○
		○ ○ ○ ○
		○ ○ ○ ○
		○ ○ ○ ○
		○ ○ ○ ○
		○ ○ ○ ○
		○ ○ ○ ○
		○ ○ ○ ○

Rating distress

0 to 24, calm to slightly uneasy. 25 to 49, mild: uncomfortable but you can cope. 50 to 64, moderate: distracting. 65 to 84, high: hard to concentrate, thinking about escape. 85 to 100, extreme: overwhelming. Your numbers are yours; they only need to be consistent with each other.

Making a rung easier or harder

Change one thing at a time: who is there, how many, how familiar the people and place are, what you do, when, where, and for how long. The same activity at a quiet time with a friend is a different rung from the same activity at a busy time alone.

Climbing it. Start on a rung you are willing to do. Repeat it several times, close together, before moving up; one good result is easy to dismiss as luck. Stay long enough to test the prediction rather than leaving at the peak of the urge to escape. If a rung keeps feeling too hard, add a bridging step or go back one. Any rung can be run as a full behavioral experiment: write it in as the situation, add a prediction, and drop a safety behavior.