

The step-up technique

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Purpose

The purpose of this exercise is to help clients identify the cause of concern that may be underpinning a given situation.

Description

The client is asked to imagine what would happen if the situation feared was actively engaged in rather than avoided. By eliciting such information, the client's underlying cause for concern becomes clear. The client is then asked to imagine the worst possible scenario and consider how s/he would cope if such a situation occurred.

Process

The client is asked to close his/her eyes and imagine the situation that s/he fears and, as with other imagery exercises, is asked to fully visualize all factors (that is, sights, sounds, smells, people present, etc.). As the client does so, the coach asks the person to explain what is happening, what thoughts are going through the client's mind and what emotions are being experienced. The coach uses this information to assist the individual to understand what may be at the bottom of the concern being experienced and also to identify the client's worst fear. Once this fear has been identified the coach can assist the client with appropriate strategies to counter such fears.

Pitfalls

The exercise should be abandoned if the client is likely to feel overwhelmed by the emotions s/he experiences.

Bibliography

Lazarus, A. A. (1989) *The Practice of Multimodal Therapy: Systematic, Comprehensive, and Effective Psychotherapy*, New York, NY: Johns Hopkins University Press.