

Session 07

Fear and trust I

Material/wall

Illustration Learning zones model, Ronja, the Robber's daughter

Individual route in current level of difficulty

Goal of the day

Perceiving one's own fear, perceiving one's own behavioural patterns, actively dealing with fears, confronting one's own fear

Exercises

Body scan, Warm-up, School of trust, Traffic light and mindfulness, The mountain

Starting phase

- | | | |
|-------|-----------------------|---|
| 00:00 | Mindfulness exercise | Body scan |
| 00:10 | Checking in | <i>How am I today?</i> |
| 00:30 | Topic: Fear and Trust | <p>Fear as an evolutionary sensible emotion: warning from dangers/the unknown</p> <p>Learning zones model: No pressure, but an awareness that boundaries have to be transgressed at times to make new experiences and to progress (expansion of one's comfortzone)</p> <p>Confrontations rationale: Taking an excerpt from Ronja the Robber's daughter – it is necessary to confront what we fear to learn how to deal with it.</p> |

Active phase

- | | | |
|-------|---------------------|--|
| 00:35 | Warm-up | Warm-up in the group, group ritual optional |
| 00:45 | Group exercise | <p>School of trust</p> <p>in pairs</p> <p><i>A very common and sensible fear is the fear of falling – which is why we want to practice this today!</i></p> |
| 01:05 | Bouldering exercise | <p>Traffic light and mindfulness</p> <p>in pairs</p> <p>Condition to deal with one's fear: perceiving the fear.</p> |

Final phase

- | | | |
|-------|---------------------|---|
| 01:35 | Final round | <i>What are you taking with you today? What experiences have you made with your fear?</i> |
| 01:50 | Relaxation exercise | The mountain |

Body scan

Therapist version

Preparation

Self-responsible "arrival" of the participants:

If you are still stuck in your daily routine, please quietly do the [5-4-3-2-1 exercise](#) for yourself to fully arrive here.

Additional tips

For the first reading, it is useful to read the whole text during the introduction of the exercise and take a break whenever a body part is named. In the course of the program, fewer prompts to this guided body scan can be used, for example, after the introduction only body parts can be named.

Description

Find a comfortable, upright sitting position.

Feel where your body meets the chair/the floor. Feel your feet touching the ground.

Take time to settle into a comfortable sitting position.

Relax all muscles you don't need to maintain your upright position (shoulders, face, etc.).

Close your eyes or direct your gaze to the floor in front of you.

Throughout the exercise, the point is not to change or achieve anything. It is about simply observing what is and accepting it as it is.

Now turn your attention inward. Breathe deeply in and out. Observe your breath, how your abdominal wall rises and falls, all by itself, without having to do anything. Just observe: In and out and pause.

Now feel into your body and take time to notice the whole body.

Now direct your attention to your toes. Observe what you can sense in the toes:

Temperature, touch, a tingling sensation, the position of the joints, something else, or maybe nothing at all. That's okay, too, just to consciously feel nothing. For some people, the idea of directing the breath there, breathing in and out of the toes, as it were, is helpful.

For a short time, return your attention to your breathing. Then turn to the soles of your feet, the heel, the ankle. And as you consciously breathe in and out of these parts of your body as well, notice all the sensations.

As soon as you notice that thoughts arise, bring your attention back to the breath and the respective body region.

Inwardly feel your way up through the legs in this way, from the ankle to the calf and shin, the knee, the kneecap, through the entire thigh to the surface and inward to (the loin and) the hip.

The focus of your attention then slowly moves through the entire lower abdomen, touching the hips once again, then the buttocks, the small of the back, the abdomen. From there it continues through the torso, the back, the rib cage (and the ribs to the breasts, to the lungs and the large blood vessels located in the rib cage), continuing to the shoulder blades to the collar bone and the shoulders.

From the shoulders you move to the arms, from the fingertips through the fingers, the ball of the hand, the palm and the back of the hand, through the wrist, the forearm, the elbow the upper arm and the crook of the arm again to the shoulders.

Then move on to the neck and throat, and finally move your attention through the face and skull.

Meanwhile, keep your attention on the breath and the various sensations in the different areas of the body. Breathe consciously in and out. Let go of sensations and thoughts as you do so.

Now finish the exercise by slowly deepening your breath and moving your body again. Notice your surroundings and give yourself a smile :)

Topic - Session 07

Fear and trust I

Background information

Fear plays a key role in evolution to be a sensible emotion: Fear warns us from dangers and protects us from taking too many risks in unknown situations. However, fear can also narrow one's life and possibilities.

This becomes clear through the **Learning zones model**: The **comfort zone** (green area) is a space of confidence, competence, and contentment. There is no fear here, but also no learning. The **learning zone** (orange area) is a space of growth and expansion of competencies. This can also lead to insecurities and feeling unwell, having mild fears and also having increased awareness/alertness. The **panic zone** (red area) is marked by strong fear, which makes us unable to grow/develop skills. Therefore, it is sometimes necessary to overcome one's fear, in order to make new experiences, expand one's area of competencies and integrate new behavioural patterns, without pressure (expansion of the comfort zone).

As in the excerpt from **Ronja, the Robber's daughter**, sometimes it is necessary to face difficulties and find out what there is to do and what to expect – only a confrontation with whatever we fear makes it possible to learn how to deal with it.

The goal is to try out perceiving one's fear and explore possibilities of how to cope with it. Individual observation and analysis of different levels of fear are necessary, for example the fear spiral (perceiving the situation (dangerous!) – Evaluation of fear (for example “now something bad is going to happen”) – body reactions (becoming tense, breathing quickly) – impulsive behaviour (for example fleeing). Further, strategies to overcome fear can be trailed, for example: choosing the do the opposite, focused body relaxation, breathing techniques (calm and deep breathing, for example 1x in and 2x out, breathing into the belly, out through the nose, pursed lip breathing) and self-regulating and calming thoughts (“I can do this!”).

Key questions

Do you know the feeling of having fear?

How or where do you feel the fear? Which body reactions do you know of yourselves? Which thoughts?

What would you like to do when you are afraid? (Flight? Freeze?)

Is there something that you can do, when you need to overcome your fears? If so, what?

Learning goals

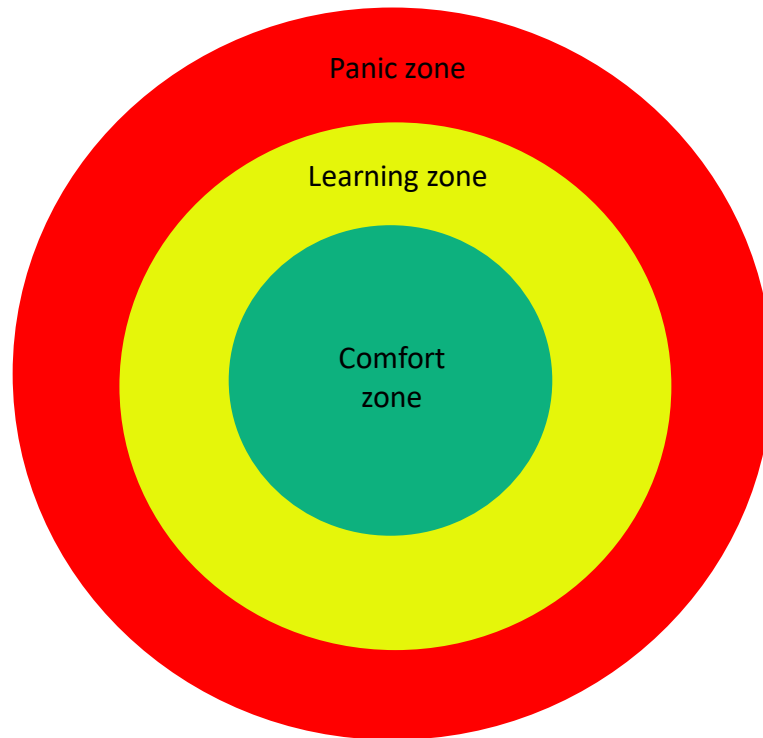
To recognise individual signs of fear and nervousness.

Recognising fear and discomfort as a natural reaction to something new, and unknown.

Understanding the rationale of confrontation: overcoming fears is sometimes necessary, in order to change something. Expanding the comfort zone by being “brave” to do something (despite fears) and moving into the learning zone.

Getting to know strategies to overcome/cope with fear.

Learning zones model



Comfort zone

State of self-confidence/experience of competence, sense of well-being, routinized action: strategies that have already proven themselves; staying in the comfort zone makes it shrink

Learning zone

State of growth and learning, new experiences and new strategies can be encountered; uncertainty at first, accepting unfamiliarity/new challenges; slowly moving from comfort zone to learning zone expands comfort zone

Panic zone

Venturing out of the comfort zone too quickly: no more available strategies, not conducive to development, should be avoided as comfort zone shrinks

The bouldering group is your own personal time, which you can use to experience yourself, to make new experiences and to change something. Do what makes you feel good! Get involved without putting yourself under pressure. If you don't want to participate in an exercise, you don't have to. Everyone is allowed to look for exactly the challenges that they need in order to make new experiences.

Pay attention to yourself and your limits. If you notice that you are not feeling well during an exercise, contact one of the therapists.

Ronja, the Robber's daughter

Ronja leaves her parents' safe castle for the first time, Mattis warns her about the dangers outside: "Beware of the wild druids, the gray gnomes and the robbers (...), then beware of getting lost in the forest (...), then beware of falling into the river."

"And you remembered everything else to beware of?"

Oh yes, she remembered. And during the following days, Ronja did nothing but beware of everything dangerous and practice not being afraid. Mattis had said that she should be careful not to fall into the river, so she jumped boldly from one smooth stone to another on the bank, where the water roared the wildest. After all, she could not beware of plunging into the river in the forest. If being careful was of any use at all, then she had to practice it at the rapids and nowhere else. But if she wanted to get to the rapids, she had to climb down Mattis Mountain, which sloped abruptly and precipitously toward the river. In this way, she could practice not being afraid of them at the same time. The first time it was difficult, she was so afraid that she had to close her eyes. But little by little she became more and more daring, and soon she knew all the crevices and cracks where her feet could find a foothold and she could cling on with her toes so that she wouldn't fall backwards into the river. What luck, she thought, to have found a place where I could keep from plopping into the river and at the same time practice not being afraid! So her days passed, Ronja guarded herself and practiced more eagerly than Mattis and Lovis suspected, and finally she became as supple and strong and fearless as a healthy little animal. She was afraid neither of the gray gnomes nor of the wild druids, neither of getting lost in the forest nor of falling into the river.

Warm-up and cool-down

Individual exercise

Description

Participants are inducted to warm-up before starting to boulder and cool-down at the end.

The warm-up consists of 3 parts:

1. Cardio warm-up: starjumps, jumping jacks
2. Mobilisation: open and close fists (with arms outstretched or at an angle), wrist turns, move arms to side and flip palms up and down, move head to each side, circle arms back and forth, cat-cow pose on all fours, stretch sideways, stretch hands down to the toes while standing, twist and stretch ankles.
3. Warm-up climb: climb 3-4 easy routes below your own level to warm-up.

Cool down consists of stretches to all muscle groups that were used.

Material/wall

Free room or space on mats

Key questions

Which exercise did you like last time? How did it go?

Variations

Due to time constraints and depending on the content of the lesson, the warm-up climb may be omitted.

Tips

Increasingly involve participants to encourage initiative.

School of trust

Partner exercise

Description

The exercise is first demonstrated by the therapist, then the participants perform the exercise themselves in teams of two. At the beginning, the two partners stand behind each other, facing the same direction (distance approx. $\frac{3}{4}$ arm's length). The person in front is letting themselves fall back, and the person behind is catching the person early on the shoulders (with arms outstretched, secure stance: T-foot position). Afterwards, they switch.

Material/wall

Free room/space on mats

Therapeutical themes

Getting to know each other/group cohesion, mindfulness, anxiety management, body awareness/body focus, communication, responsibility/dependence.

Key questions

How did you guys feel about the exercise? Did you find it easy/hard to trust? What helps to trust?

Variations

Different variations can be performed in ascending difficulty: the distance to the catcher's hands is increased, then drop with eyes closed, then drop forward. The participants walk in pairs through the hall, the person in front raises his hand in the air, counts down from 3 with his fingers and drops at 0, the person behind catches.

In addition, the exercise can be done as a group exercise: Participants stand in a circle, 1-2 people walk by on the outside and tap a selected person on the shoulder, they drop backwards and are caught.

Tips

This is very much about trust among each other: trust is hard to build and easily destroyed. Therefore, it is advisable to take slow steps, to demonstrate the exercise and to slow participants down rather than incite them.

There should be an absolute feeling of psychological and physical safety. Important: only let yourself fall if you really want to - if you don't want to, stay standing!

Make sure that the body tension is maintained! Participants who find it difficult to let themselves fall will, for example, try to let only the upper body fall and keep the legs straight. This should be noticed and addressed. It may be helpful to change the posture of the head: Look straight ahead and fix your gaze onto a point in the room!

Perform the exercise "falling forward" only with same-sex couples.

Partners should be about the same height and weight.

Traffic light & mindfulness

Individual/partner exercise

Description

The exercise is based on the [learning zones model](#) and should train the awareness of transitions between the zones (green comfort zone, orange learning zone, red panic zone). Participants choose a route of their current level and should focus specifically on physical and psychological signs of nervousness and tension. This will be supported by a partner or a therapist supervising.

Material/wall

Individual route in current level of difficulty, not too much force

Therapeutical themes

Anxiety awareness, mindfulness, introspection

Key questions

What changed in terms of your sensation and experience while you were bouldering? Which body signals did you notice with yourselves/your partners?

Variations

In one variation of the exercise strategies of overcoming fear can be used specifically. This should only be applied if the participant is particularly anxious, and underestimates their skills. In this case anxiety management strategies can be discussed prior to the exercise, for participants to know what they can do when they get into the 'orange' zone (for example breathing techniques and self-instructions).

Tips

It is important that participants are not pushed over their boundaries, making sure that they are objectively safe! With some participant it is important to deal with anxiety and move into the orange zone, while some need to be increase their early awareness of fear and not move on from the orange into the red zone. The protective function of fear should be appreciated also!

The mountain

Therapist version

Additional tips

This exercise is done while sitting. Leave enough time between paragraphs and read slowly in a meditative voice.

Description

Close your eyes and let the image of the most beautiful mountain you can imagine arise in your mind's eye. It can be a mountain that you already know or a mountain from your imagination. Now let this image become clearer and clearer.

Look closely at the shape of your mountain - its rock, its peak rising into the sky, and its foundation resting in the earth.

Consider its steep or gently sloping sides. Also notice how massive your mountain is - how solid - how motionless and how beautiful! Seen both from a distance and up close - a beauty that comes from its unique shape and form.

Perhaps the top is covered with snow; and its lower slopes are forested; perhaps it has a particularly lofty peak or even several peaks or a high plateau.

The mountain is deeply anchored in the earth, standing firm and secure. And even when clouds obscure it, when a storm rages around it, the mountain is always the mountain. Just sit here and breathe and become aware of the qualities of this mountain.

And you are the mountain.

You are the mountain with all its features and characteristics - with all its beauty! Sit like a mountain! Dignified and silent. Your head becomes the towering peak or the vast plateau, just as you imagined your mountain peak. Your shoulders and arms, your front are the slopes, your buttocks and legs form the solid base - rooted to the chair, cushion or ground.

Deep within your own body along the spine, experience the ascending quality of the mountain. And now, as you sit here, with each breath become a little more like this breathing mountain. Centered, present and unshakably resting in your stillness - completely what you are - beyond words and thoughts.

Become aware that the mountain is simply sitting there as the sun moves across the sky and light and shadow and color change from moment to moment. Day is followed by night and night is followed by day again! The mountain experiences constant change and yet always remains itself. It remains still while the seasons merge and the weather changes from day to day and from moment to moment.

See how the mountain embodies the stillness that outlasts all change. It just sits there and is itself.

Its magnificence and beauty are not dependent on whether or not it is seen or what the weather is like. The mountain doesn't care whether it is in the sunlight or enveloped in clouds - whether it is blazing hot or freezing cold. It just sits there and is itself.

Sometimes the fiercest storms and thunderstorms of unimaginable strength roar on it; and then spring comes - the birds sing again in the trees and flowers bloom in the mountain meadows, and huge amounts of meltwater shoot down into the valley in the mountain streams. While all of this is happening, the mountain just sits there, not really being impressed by what is happening on its surface.

Despite the constant changes in our own lives, we can embody the same unwavering stillness and a sense of being rooted - just like the mountain.

You can relive this image of the mountain from time to time - whenever you need its qualities. You can become this mountain again and again, you can sit like a mountain again and again in between. Mindful, dignified, present and deeply rooted with the earth in true stillness.

Now you say goodbye to your mountain and become yourself again. But you take a piece of it with you into your life, which you now re-enter with all your attention.

You consciously breathe in and out deeply, stretch your arms and legs and come back to the here and now.