

Uncertainty Ladder

Anxiety comes from a difficulty in tolerating uncertainty. We get anxious when we don't know what the outcome is going to be. For example, a child does not know what might happen at school on Monday, so they start to worry about all the potential things that COULD happen. For some this becomes unmanageable.

One thing you can do to help your child, is build up their ability to cope with uncertain situations.

A way to do this is to build an uncertainty ladder.

The following instructions explain how to do this:

It is recommended that you work with your child to complete this task where possible.

1. Come up with a list of activities or situations that often make your child worried or anxious
2. Give each situation a score out of 10 for how difficult it would be

It may look something like this...

Walking to school with a friend	4/10
Going upstairs on my own	3/10
Sleeping with no light on	8/10
Going food shopping with Dad	5/10
Staying at a friend's house for tea	6/10
Staying at aunties house overnight	8/10

From this list we can see that going upstairs is the least difficult and staying overnight at aunties house and sleeping with no light on are the most difficult.

You can now use these to create an uncertainty ladder.

Activity	Completed? (make sure you can do it a few times successfully before moving on)			reward
Going upstairs on my own				Hot chocolate
Walking to school with friend				
Going food shopping with Dad				
Staying at friends house of tea				
Staying at Aunties house overnight				
Sleeping with no light on				

3. Now the ladder has been created – work out some rewards for when the step has been completed – these should be equal to the task. i.e. smaller task, smaller reward.

Rewards should be given only when the task has been successful.

They should not cost you a lot of money. Examples of suitable rewards:

- 15 minutes extra on the X-Box
- Have a friend over for tea
- An hour to teach parent how to play a computer game
- A lie in at the weekend
- Breakfast in bed for one day
- A movie night with the family
- Choose favourite meal one night this week

It is important that after each attempt at one of the steps, that you praise your child – even if not successful. **I.e. I am so proud of how you brave you were when you tried to Even though you were scared, you still gave it a go!**

Be specific with your praise – avoid things like – well done, that was good. Tell them what you are praising them for.

TOP TIPS:

- Work with your child to make sure the steps are not too challenging to begin with. It can be good to start with something you know they can already do – this can aid motivation!
- Make sure your child is involved with planning the steps and the rewards – you need them to be engaged with it!
- After each attempt at a step – discuss it as soon as possible and give praise/rewards. If you leave it too long after they have done the activity, the learning from it is less effective.
- When discussing after the event, have your child reflect on whether it was as bad as they thought, how do they feel now they have tried etc. **The next page has a sheet you could fill out with your child after each attempt.**
- No more than 10 steps – any more can become overwhelming. Aim for more than 5 to make it effective.
- Once you have completed the first ladder – there is nothing stopping you creating another, more challenging one. Providing your child with opportunities to challenge their anxiety, is key to building resilience.

HANDOUT 9 – KEEPING TRACK OF MY CHILD'S PROGRESS WITH THEIR STEP-BY-STEP PLAN

Date/Time	Which step did my child try?	What did they think would happen?	What strategies did I use to encourage them to 'have a go'?	How did it go? What did my child do?	What did they learn?

My Uncertainty Ladder

Activity	Completed? (make sure you can do it a few times successfully before moving on)			reward
				
				

