

List of Typically Avoided Situations for Trauma Survivors

Some typical examples of upsetting situations for trauma survivors that usually lead to avoidance include:

1. In cases of assault, being around men you don't know, especially those who somehow remind you of the assailant (e.g., a man of the same race)
2. Someone standing close or coming up suddenly
3. Being touched by someone (especially someone unfamiliar)
4. Doing something similar to the trauma situation (e.g., for motor vehicle accident survivors, driving or riding in a car)
5. Walking down a street or being out in the open
6. Being alone at home (day or night)
7. Going somewhere alone at night
8. Being in a crowded mall or store
9. Talking to strangers
10. Driving a car or being stopped at a stoplight
11. Being in a parking lot
12. Riding in elevators or being in small, confined spaces
13. Reading about a similar event in the newspaper or hearing about it on television
14. Talking with someone about the trauma
15. Watching movies that remind you of the trauma (e.g., combat films, assault scenes)
16. Going to the area of town where the traumatic event happened
17. Riding public transportation
18. Hugging and kissing significant others
19. Sexual or physical contact

20. Listening to a song that you heard during the traumatic event or that was from that same time
21. Watching the news on TV
22. Wearing makeup or looking attractive
23. Going to a movie that has some violence
24. Taking an exercise class
25. Driving a car with unknown people and piles of unidentifiable material next to the road that you fear could be explosives
26. Coming upon a stopped car while driving and not being able to get around it
27. Smelling food or spices similar to those present during the traumatic experience

Safety Considerations When Constructing the In Vivo Exposure Hierarchy

It is important that the situations you plan to confront during in vivo exposure are safe or low-risk. We do not want you to put situations that are dangerous or high-risk on your list. For example, we would not want you to walk alone in areas where drugs are sold or in a park where crimes are regularly committed. Instead, we want you to pick situations that trigger your anxiety but are realistically safe. For example, you could walk in a public park with another person, or plan to walk alone in a safe area of the city.