Phobia setback plan

Keep the learning visible. Match each early sign with a practical response rather than waiting for a difficult week.

Editable PDF: replace or delete the fictional examples. Blank PDF: print and write. Guidance follows.

What I have learned

e.g. I can choose a step and learn while afraid.

If I notice...	A small response I can use	Support / when to review
e.g. Avoiding agreed practice.	e.g. Return to a manageable agreed step.	e.g. Discuss obstacles in therapy.

Helpful habits to keep

e.g. Regular safe practice in agreed situations.

Support / when to ask for help

e.g. Contact my therapist if daily life becomes harder or this plan is not enough.

Review date / reminder

e.g. Review next month and after a change in circumstances.

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Using this resource

Phobia setback plan

What this helps with

Fear can return after a gap, a stressful week or an unfamiliar encounter. That does not erase previous learning. A maintenance plan keeps your own evidence easy to find and helps you respond before avoidance spreads. Choose small, relevant opportunities to practise in normal life. Review changes in circumstances and safety rather than automatically repeating old tasks. The goal is continued freedom and confidence in taking useful action, not a promise never to feel afraid.

How to use it

1. Write your most useful learning in your own words, using actual experiences.
2. Notice early signs that avoidance, checking or reassurance are returning.
3. Choose realistic opportunities to keep practising in safe, varied contexts.
4. Plan a smaller restart step for difficult weeks and identify support.
5. Set a review date and note when you would seek further professional help.

A fictional worked example

After making progress with escalators, Farah avoided them for several months during a busy period. On her next shopping trip she felt frightened again and thought that therapy had stopped working. Her plan reminded her that she had previously travelled on an escalator while anxious and still stepped off safely. She resumed a manageable, previously agreed step in a familiar place, then reviewed it before varying the location. She kept ordinary safety precautions. Her progress measure was using the shops she wanted to visit, rather than proving she could do every escalator or feel completely calm.

Keep in mind

Reassess new medical problems, fainting or changes in actual risk before restarting exercises. If avoidance grows substantially or previous practice becomes overwhelming, seek support. Maintenance practice should never require unnecessary procedures, unsafe animal contact or ignoring health advice.

Sources and attribution

Craske, M. G., Treanor, M., Conway, C. C., Zbozinek, T., & Vervliet, B. (2014). Maximizing exposure therapy: An inhibitory learning approach. Behaviour Research and Therapy, 58, 10-23.

Original material informed by the sources above. No outside organisation endorses this worksheet.

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