

Phobias

Psychology

The two-process model, and why exposure works.

Mowrer's two-process model.

1

Acquisition — classical

A neutral stimulus is paired with fear and becomes conditioned.

2

Maintenance — operant

Avoiding it removes anxiety, negatively reinforcing the avoidance.

3

No extinction

Because the person never stays long enough for the fear to fall.

4

Exposure breaks it

Staying present until anxiety declines allows extinction learning.

EXPOSURE APPROACHES

Systematic desensitisation — graded, with relaxation

Flooding — immediate, prolonged

In vivo exposure is more effective than imagined

Educational reference. Preparedness: humans acquire fear of snakes and heights far more readily than of cars or plugs.