

11

Natural Environment Phobias Clinical Practice Workbook

A clinically branded, function-preserving edition retaining the original exercises, psychoeducation, checklists, logs, planning tools, and response space.

DSM-5-TR · ICD-11 CLINICAL ALIGNMENT

1 · Understanding Natural Environment Phobias

2 · My Phobia Journal

3 · Symptoms Checklist

4 · Cognitive Restructuring

5 · Relaxation Techniques

6 · Gradual Exposure

7 · Imaginal Exposure

8 · Support Network

9 · Self-Compassion

10 · Managing Panic Attacks

11 · Lifestyle Changes

How to use this workbook

- Use this workbook selectively and collaboratively; it is educational and does not replace individualized assessment, diagnosis, treatment, medical care, or crisis services.
- Skip, pause, or modify any activity that increases distress, danger, shame, or loss of functioning. Adapt language for culture, disability, neurodivergence, health, resources, and lived context.
- Ratings in this workbook are reflection tools unless a named, validated measure and interpretation are explicitly provided.

Contents

Understanding Natural Environment Phobias	4
My Phobia Journal	8
Symptoms Checklist	10
Cognitive Restructuring	13
Relaxation Techniques	15
Gradual Exposure	18
Imaginal Exposure	21
Support Network	22
Self-Compassion	28
Managing Panic Attacks	30
Lifestyle Changes	32

Understanding Natural Environment Phobias

1. What is your specific natural environment phobia?

Example: Fear of thunderstorms (astraphobia)

My phobia is: _____

2. Describe how you feel when you encounter your phobia.

Example: When I hear thunder, my heart races, I start to sweat, and I feel a strong urge to hide.

3. How long have you had this phobia?

Example: I have had a fear of thunderstorms since I was a child.

4. List the specific situations or elements that trigger your phobia.

Example: Seeing dark clouds, hearing thunder, watching weather forecasts about storms.

5. How do you typically react when faced with these triggers?

Example: I avoid going outside, close all the windows, and put on noise-canceling headphones.

6. Are there any specific locations where your phobia is more intense?

Example: My fear of thunderstorms is worse when I'm alone at home.

7. What physical symptoms do you experience when your phobia is triggered?

Example: Rapid heartbeat, sweating, trembling, shortness of breath.

8. What emotional symptoms do you experience?

Example: Intense fear, panic, dread, feeling out of control.

9. How does your phobia impact your daily life?

Example: I avoid outdoor activities, cancel plans if there's a storm forecast, and feel anxious during certain seasons.

10. Do you know when and how your phobia started?

Example: My fear of thunderstorms started after I experienced a severe storm while camping as a child.

11. Can you identify any past experiences that might have contributed to your phobia?

Example: Watching a scary movie about natural disasters, experiencing a traumatic event related to the environment.

12. Have there been any significant life changes that intensified your phobia?

Example: Moving to a region with frequent storms, experiencing a stressful period in life.

13. What strategies have you used to cope with your phobia?

Example: Avoidance, seeking comfort from friends or family, using relaxation techniques.

14. Which strategies have been most effective for you?

Example: Listening to calming music, practicing deep breathing exercises.

My Phobia Journal

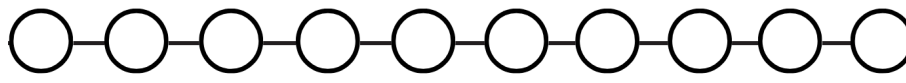
1. Describe the situation or environment where you encountered your phobia.

2. What specific element or trigger caused your fear?

3. What emotions did you experience?

4. What physical symptoms did you experience?

5. Rate the intensity of your fear on a scale of 1 to 10.


1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6. What thoughts went through your mind during the encounter?

7. What coping strategies did you use during the encounter?

8. How effective were these strategies?

9. What did you learn from this encounter?

10. How can you apply this learning to future encounters with your phobia?

11. What triggers or situations are you likely to encounter in the future?

12. What coping strategies will you use?

Symptoms Checklist

1. Review the list of symptoms below. Check off any symptoms you have experienced. Add any additional symptoms in the space provided at the end of each category. Rate the overall intensity of your symptoms on a scale of 1 to 10.

Physical Symptoms

- ☐ Rapid heartbeat
- ☐ Shortness of breath
- ☐ Sweating
- ☐ Trembling or shaking
- ☐ Nausea or upset stomach
- ☐ Dizziness or lightheadedness
- ☐ Chest pain or discomfort
- ☐ Chills or hot flashes
- ☐ Muscle tension
- ☐ Dry mouth
- ☐ Headache
- ☐ Tingling or numbness
- ☐ Fatigue or weakness
- ☐ _____

Emotional Symptoms

- ☐ Intense fear
- ☐ Panic
- ☐ Anxiety
- ☐ Dread
- ☐ Feeling out of control

- ☐ Feeling trapped
- ☐ Overwhelming urge to escape
- ☐ Irritability
- ☐ Sadness or depression
- ☐ _____

Cognitive Symptoms

- ☐ Racing thoughts
- ☐ Difficulty concentrating
- ☐ Negative or catastrophic thoughts
- ☐ Fear of losing control
- ☐ Fear of dying
- ☐ Confusion
- ☐ Memory problems
- ☐ _____

Behavioral Symptoms

- ☐ Avoidance of triggers
- ☐ Seeking reassurance
- ☐ Crying
- ☐ Pacing
- ☐ Clinging to others
- ☐ Refusal to participate in activities
- ☐ Using safety behaviors (e.g., carrying a water bottle, staying near exits)
- ☐ _____

2. How often do you experience symptoms related to your phobia?

- ☐ Daily
- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ Occasionally

3. How do your symptoms affect your daily life?

- ☐ Interfere with work or school
- ☐ Disrupt social activities
- ☐ Affect relationships
- ☐ Limit recreational activities
- ☐ Cause significant distress
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Cognitive Restructuring

1. Describe a recent situation where you experienced fear related to your natural environment phobia.

Example: I was hiking and saw a snake on the trail.

2. Identify the negative thoughts you had during this situation.

Example: "The snake is going to bite me," "I am not safe here."

3. How did these thoughts make you feel?

Example: I felt terrified, my heart was racing, and I wanted to run away.

4. What evidence supports your negative thoughts? What evidence contradicts your negative thoughts?

Evidence for	Evidence against
<i>e.g., Snakes can bite and some are venomous.</i>	<i>Most snakes are not aggressive, and I have seen many snakes before without being bitten.</i>

Evidence for	Evidence against

5. What are some alternative, more balanced thoughts you can have in this situation?

Example: "Most snakes are not dangerous," "I can keep a safe distance and continue hiking."

6. Create affirmations based on your new beliefs to reinforce positive thinking.

Example: "I am safe and can handle any situation that arises in nature."

Relaxation Techniques

Relaxation techniques can help manage the anxiety and stress associated with natural environment phobias.

1. Deep Breathing

- Sit or lie down in a comfortable position.
- Place one hand on your chest and the other on your abdomen.
- Inhale deeply through your nose for a count of four, feeling your abdomen rise.
- Hold your breath for a count of four.
- Exhale slowly through your mouth for a count of four, feeling your abdomen fall.

Repeat this process for 5-10 minutes.

How did you feel before and after practicing deep breathing?

2. Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)

- Find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed.
- Sit or lie down in a comfortable position.
- Start with your toes and work your way up to your head, tensing each muscle group for 5 seconds, then relaxing them for 10-15 seconds.
- Focus on the difference in sensation between tension and relaxation.

How did you feel before and after practicing PMR?

3. Visualization

- Sit or lie down in a comfortable position.
- Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths.
- Imagine yourself in a peaceful and safe place (e.g., a beach, a meadow).
- Use all your senses to make the image as vivid as possible.

Spend 5-10 minutes visualizing this scene.

How did you feel before and after the visualization?

4. Mindfulness Meditation

- Find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed.
- Sit comfortably with your back straight and hands resting in your lap.
- Close your eyes and focus on your breathing.
- If your mind wanders, gently bring your focus back to your breath.

Practice for 5-10 minutes.

How easy or difficult was it to stay focused on your breath?

5. Grounding Techniques

- Find a comfortable place to sit or stand.
- Take a few deep breaths to relax.
- Focus on the feeling of your feet on the ground.
- Imagine roots growing from your feet into the earth, providing stability.
- Continue focusing on this image for 5-10 minutes.

How did you feel before and after practicing grounding techniques?

Gradual Exposure

Gradual exposure is a therapeutic technique that involves facing fears in a structured and incremental way, starting with less anxiety-provoking situations and gradually progressing to more challenging ones.

1. Identify specific fears related to your natural environment phobia and rank them from least to most anxiety-provoking.

Identify specific aspects of the natural environment that trigger your phobia. Rate your anxiety level for each fear on a scale from 0 to 10 (0 = no anxiety, 10 = extreme anxiety).

Example: "Fear of thunderstorms: 8, Fear of heights: 7, Fear of deep water: 9."

2. Rank the fears from least to most anxiety-provoking.

Example: "1. Fear of heights (7), 2. Fear of thunderstorms (8), 3. Fear of deep water (9)."

3. Select the least anxiety-provoking fear from your hierarchy to start with.

Example: "I will start with my fear of heights."

4. Break down the fear into smaller, manageable steps.

Example: "1. Look at pictures of mountains, 2. Watch videos of people hiking, 3. Visit a small hill, 4. Climb a low mountain."

5. Begin with the first step in your exposure plan and engage in the activity regularly.

Example: "I will start by looking at pictures of mountains for 5 minutes each day."

6. Keep a journal to record your experiences, anxiety levels, and progress with each step.

Date	Exposure Exercise	Reactions and feelings
<i>e.g., Monday</i>	<i>I looked at pictures of mountains for 5 minutes</i>	<i>I felt anxious at first, but it got easier.</i>

Date	Exposure Exercise	Reactions and feelings

Imaginal Exposure

Imaginal exposure is a therapeutic technique where you vividly imagine a feared situation instead of physically confronting it. This method helps you confront and process your fears in a safe and controlled environment.

1. Select the least anxiety-provoking fear from your hierarchy to start with. Break down the fear into smaller, manageable scenarios to imagine.

Example: "I will start with my fear of heights."

1. Imagining standing at the base of a hill, 2. Imagining climbing halfway up a small hill, 3. Imagining standing at the top of a small hill.

2. Set specific goals for each imaginal exposure session.

Example: "I will spend 5 minutes imagining standing at the base of a hill every day for one week."

Once you feel comfortable with the current scenario, move to the next scenario in your plan.

Support Network

1. List the people in your life who provide emotional support.

2. Identify the specific ways these individuals support you.

Example: My sister listens to me when I'm anxious, my friend encourages me to face my fears, my therapist provides professional guidance.

3. Are there any gaps in your support network? If so, what kind of support do you feel you are missing?

Example: I need more practical support when facing my phobia, such as someone to accompany me during exposure therapy.

4. List the people you can reach out to for additional support.

Example: A coworker who has offered to help, a support group for phobias, a mentor.

5. Draft a message or conversation starter to ask for support.

Example: “Hi [Name], I’ve been struggling with my fear of heights, and I was wondering if you could help me by accompanying me on a short hike this weekend?”

6. Identify any barriers that might prevent you from seeking support and brainstorm solutions.

Barrier	Solution
<i>e.g., Fear of burdening others.</i>	<i>Remind myself that asking for help is a sign of strength and that people who care about me want to support me.</i>

7. Describe how emotional support helps you cope with your phobia.

Example: Talking to my friend about my fears helps me feel less alone and more understood.

8. Describe how practical support helps you manage your phobia.

Example: Having someone accompany me to a place I fear helps me feel safer and more confident.

9. Describe how professional support, such as therapy, helps you overcome your phobia.

Example: My therapist teaches me coping strategies and helps me understand the root of my fears.

10. Describe how peer support, such as support groups, helps you manage your phobia.

Example: Hearing others' experiences and strategies gives me new ideas and makes me feel less isolated.

11. How will you stay connected with the people in your support network?

Example: Regular check-ins, sending updates, scheduling regular meetings or calls.

12. What can you do to show appreciation for the support you receive?

Example: Express gratitude, offer support in return, celebrate progress together.

13. How will you handle conflicts or misunderstandings within your support network?

Example: Communicate openly and honestly, seek to understand the other person's perspective, and find a compromise.

14. Reflect on the current state of your support network. What is working well? What could be improved?

Example: My family is very supportive, but I need to communicate more with my friends about my needs.

15. Set specific goals for strengthening your support network.

*Example: Goal 1: Reach out to a support group for people with phobias.
Goal 2: Schedule regular check-ins with my therapist.*

16. Keep a log of your interactions with your support network.

Person	Type of Support	Outcome	Notes
<i>e.g., My sister</i>	<i>Emotional</i>	<i>Felt understood and less anxious</i>	<i>She listened without judgment and offered helpful advice.</i>

Person	Type of Support	Outcome	Notes

Self-Compassion

Practicing self-compassion involves treating yourself with kindness and understanding when you face difficulties or make mistakes.

1. Identify critical thoughts you have about yourself regarding your phobia.

Example: "I'm so weak for being afraid of heights," "I should be able to handle this."

2. Write self-compassionate responses to these critical thoughts.

Example: "It's okay to be afraid. Everyone has fears, and I'm doing my best to manage them."

3. Reflect on how your phobia makes you feel isolated.

Example: I feel like I'm the only one who's afraid of thunderstorms, and it makes me feel alone.

4. Recognize that many people experience similar fears.

Example: Many people are afraid of thunderstorms; it's a common fear.

5. Write a statement to remind yourself that you're not alone in your fear.

Example: "I'm not alone in this. Many people face similar fears, and it's a part of being human."

6. Write a letter to yourself as if you were writing to a friend who is struggling with the same phobia.

7. When you feel overwhelmed, take a self-compassion break. Place your hand over your heart and say:

- "This is a moment of suffering."
- "Suffering is a part of life."
- "May I be kind to myself in this moment."

Practice this exercise whenever you feel anxious or fearful.

Managing Panic Attacks

1. List the physical symptoms that signal the beginning of a panic attack.

Example: Sweating, trembling, rapid heartbeat.

2. List the emotional and cognitive symptoms that signal the beginning of a panic attack.

Example: Intense fear, feeling of impending doom, racing thoughts.

3. How can you use these early warning signs to take preventive action?

Example: As soon as I notice my heart racing, I can start deep breathing exercises.

4. Create a step-by-step plan for managing a panic attack.

Example:

- Recognize early warning signs.
- Start deep breathing exercises.
- Use grounding technique.
- Repeat positive affirmations.
- Visualize a peaceful place.

My plan:

5. Reflect on a recent panic attack. Describe the coping strategies you used.

Example: I used deep breathing and grounding techniques.

6. How effective were these strategies?

Example: Deep breathing helped reduce my anxiety, but I struggled with grounding.

7. What could you do differently next time?

Example: I could try using visualization earlier in the panic attack.

Lifestyle Changes

1. Describe your current daily routine.

Example: I wake up at 7 AM, go to work, come home, watch TV, and go to bed at 10 PM.

2. Identify areas of your lifestyle that may contribute to your anxiety.

Example: Lack of physical activity, irregular sleep patterns, unhealthy eating habits.

3. Identify ways to incorporate more physical activity into your routine.

Example: Go for a 30-minute walk every morning, join a yoga class twice a week.

4. Develop a plan to improve your sleep hygiene.

Example: Establish a bedtime routine, avoid screens an hour before bed, limit caffeine intake after 2 PM.

5. Identify changes to improve your diet and nutrition.

Example: Eat a balanced breakfast every morning, prepare healthy lunches at home.

6. Identify current sources of stress in your life.

Example: Work deadlines, family responsibilities.

7. List activities or practices that help you relax and reduce stress.

Example: Reading, listening to music, practicing mindfulness.

8. Assess your current social connections and support network.

Example: I have a few close friends but don't see them often.

9. Identify ways to strengthen and expand your support network.

Example: Schedule regular meet-ups with friends, join a local club or group.

2026 Clinical Alignment

DSM-5-TR (including Sept. 2025 update) · ICD-11 CDDR / 2026 MMS

Classification status

- DSM-5-TR: Specific phobia · Formal diagnosis when threshold is met; subtype may describe the stimulus.
- ICD-11 CDDR: 6B03 Specific phobia · Formal diagnosis.
- This workbook is non-diagnostic. A title, checklist, or completed activity never establishes a diagnosis.

Pages requiring the updated interpretation

- The audit identified source pages 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 29, 30, 32, 33. The statements below supersede incompatible diagnostic, scoring, safety, or resource wording on those pages.

Diagnostic and differential limits

- Confirm persistent, excessive fear with avoidance/endurance and impairment; exclude medical danger, trauma-related disorders, OCD, panic/agoraphobia, illness anxiety, and culturally proportionate fear.

Document-specific corrections

- Pages [2] · Frame · Natural Environment Phobias · using the DSM/ICD status below; add duration, impairment, exclusions, and differentials without reproducing criteria. The title alone must never be treated as a diagnosis.
- Pages [1, 2, 3, 8, 10, 11, 18, 32] · Treat the Natural Environment Phobias ratings/checklists as author-created reflection tools only. Remove unsupported severity bands, cutoffs, totals, or language suggesting diagnostic validity; label response anchors and recall period explicitly.
- Pages [1, 3, 6, 18, 21, 22] · Exposure should follow an individualized hierarchy with informed consent, repeated learning-focused practice, response-prevention guidance, and screening for medical danger, trauma cues, dissociation, fainting risk, panic-related medical mimics, and substance effects; avoid reassurance that guarantees safety. Apply this specifically to the workbook's Understanding Natural Environment Phobias, My Phobia Journal, Symptoms Checklist, Cognitive Restructuring sections.
- Pages [1, 7, 10, 19, 20, 29, 30, 32, 33] · Review all medical assertions in Natural Environment Phobias with a qualified medical professional; distinguish psychoeducation from individualized advice and add referral thresholds, contraindications, and medication/procedure cautions appropriate to this population.

Measures, scoring, and permissions

- Treat the Natural Environment Phobias ratings/checklists as author-created reflection tools only. Remove unsupported severity bands, cutoffs, totals, or language suggesting diagnostic validity; label response anchors and recall period explicitly. custom/unvalidated unless evidence is supplied confirm no third-party item wording was adapted

Intervention scope and contraindications

- Exposure should follow an individualized hierarchy with informed consent, repeated learning-focused practice, response-prevention guidance, and screening for medical danger, trauma cues, dissociation, fainting risk, panic-related medical mimics, and substance effects; avoid reassurance that guarantees safety.
- Exposure work should be formulation-driven, collaborative, graded, and designed to reduce avoidance and unhelpful safety behavior not delivered as forced flooding. Screen medical and trauma-related explanations when relevant.

Crisis and current resources

- For immediate danger or a medical emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department. In the U.S., call or text 988 or use 988lifeline.org. Outside the U.S., use verified local emergency and crisis services. A workbook is not a crisis service or safety plan.

Authoritative references

- <https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/practice/dsm/updates-to-dsm/updates-to-dsm-5-tr-criteria-text>

2026 Clinical Alignment

DSM-5-TR (including Sept. 2025 update) · ICD-11 CDDR / 2026 MMS

- <https://icd.who.int/browse/2026-01/mms/en>
- https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/treat/txessentials/prolonged_exposure_pro.asp
- <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240077263>
- <https://988lifeline.org/>
- <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg113/chapter/recommendations>