

The most important thing for recovery is to face, and deal with, the memory of the traumatic event rather than push it into the back of your mind.

Because the memory can cause intense fear, anxiety and distress, people often want to escape or avoid anything associated with the event.

Although avoidance provides temporary relief, it is one of the main reasons why people don't recover.

When people start relying on avoidance to cope, they have no opportunity to develop skills that will help them feel safe or comfortable when faced with reminders of the traumatic event. The anxiety then starts to spread to other areas of their lives.

To overcome this, therapy will help you to face the traumatic memories and confront situations, people or places that you have avoided since the event, in a safe way.

I will encourage you to gradually recall and think about your traumatic memories until they no longer create high levels of distress.

This is called 'imaginal exposure'. You can do this at your own pace and we will discuss skills to manage any distress. I will also help you to go into situations that you want to avoid, because they remind you of the trauma or trigger anxiety (this is called 'in vivo exposure').

You will learn skills to help you to achieve important goals. For example:

- to start driving a car again after being involved in a car accident, or
- to go back to work when the trauma occurred in your workplace.

We will take things slowly, help you gain control of your fears step by step, and make sure that you never feel overwhelmed by your feelings.