

# IN VIVO EXPOSURE THERAPY

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## In Vivo Exposure Therapy: Overview and Evidence-Based Treatment

### Introduction

In vivo exposure therapy (IVET) is a type of cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) used to treat individuals with anxiety disorders. It is based on the principles of habituation and extinction that states that repeated exposure to a feared stimulus, in a safe and supportive environment, will lead to decreased anxiety and fear associated with the stimulus. IVET involves exposing an individual to the feared stimulus, such as a feared object or situation, in order for them to confront their fears directly. This type of therapy is supported by a growing body of evidence, which suggests that it may be an effective treatment for a variety of anxiety disorders.

### Rationale for In Vivo Exposure Therapy

IVET is based on the principles of habituation and extinction, which state that repeated exposure to a feared stimulus can lead to a decrease in fear. This is because the individual is able to confront their fear directly in a safe and supportive environment. Additionally, the individual is able to learn new coping skills, such as relaxation techniques, which can be used to manage their anxiety. Through repeated exposure to the feared stimulus, the individual is able to learn how to manage their anxiety and eventually become desensitized to it.

### Evidence for Effectiveness

Research studies have demonstrated that IVET is effective in treating a variety of anxiety disorders. Studies have found that IVET is effective in reducing symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), social anxiety disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), and specific phobias. Studies have also found that IVET is associated with increased coping skills, improvements in functioning, and decreases in anxiety symptoms.

A meta-analysis of 20 studies found that IVET is an effective treatment for anxiety disorders, with an overall effect size of .97. Furthermore, a systematic review of 18 studies found that IVET is an effective treatment for OCD, with an overall effect size of .89. Additionally, a systematic review of 10 studies found that IVET is an effective treatment for specific phobias, with an overall effect size of .89.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, IVET is an evidence-based treatment for anxiety disorders. It is based on the principles of habituation and extinction, which state that repeated exposure to a feared stimulus, in a safe and supportive environment, can lead to decreased anxiety and fear associated with the stimulus. Research studies have demonstrated that IVET is effective in treating a variety of anxiety disorders, including PTSD, social anxiety disorder, OCD, and specific phobias.

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