

## Definition Assignment

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Hi all,

For the writing definition assignment, I chose the word Systematic Desensitization. I am currently majoring in Psychology and this term often arise when I'm learning about therapy. The scenario I chose is a counsellor talking to his/her client about a behavioral therapy they will try to overcome the client's problems with anxiety and/or phobias. In order to really understand the definition of Systematic Desentization, I provided the parenthetical, sentence and expanded definition.

**Parenthetical Definition:** Systematic Desentization (a behavioral therapy that asks clients to describe a situation that triggers their anxiety/phobias) is used for clients with anxiety problems.

**Sentence Definition:** Systematic Desentization is a behavioral therapy where clients are asked to rank a situation that triggers their anxiety and/or phobias.

### **Expanded Definition:**

During the 1950s, a Psychologist named Joseph Wolphe stumbled upon an 18 year old man who suffered a severe handwashing compulsion because he was afraid of being contaminated by others with urine. This experience caused Wolphe to develop the therapy of Systematic Desentization based on the principles of classical conditioning. Systematic Desentization is a behavioral therapy that tries to reduce an anxiety or phobiane has on a certain object, creature or situation by substituting it with a relaxation response. In short, there are 3 steps a psychologist does to implement this therapy to clients. First, the client is guided to a deep relaxation technique. Second, they are asked to create and imagine a fear hierarchy associated with the object or thing they are afraid of and slowly build up that hierarchy to the most fearful situation they could imagine. Third, the clients are asked to imagine from the least provoking stimuli to the most provoking stimuli and this is done repeatedly until they no longer feel that anxiety anymore. In order for this therapy to work, it usually takes 4-6 up to 12 sessions depending on how severe the phobia is.

Behavior	Fear rating
Think about a spider.	10
Look at a photo of a spider.	25
Look at a real spider in a closed box.	50
Hold the box with the spider.	60
Let a spider crawl on your desk.	70
Let a spider crawl on your shoe.	80
Let a spider crawl on your pants leg.	90
Let a spider crawl on your sleeve.	95
Let a spider crawl on your bare arm.	100

Figure 1: An example of the fear hierarchy of someone with a fear of spiders

Source: Mcleod, Saul. "Systematic Desensitization." *Systematic Desensitization – A Treatment for Phobias / Simply Psychology*, 1 Jan. 1970, <https://simplypsychology.org/Systematic-Desensitisation.html>.

#### References:

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