

Fear Ladder: Time with a Friend

These first steps build up to getting together with one friend, with his brother there for support at the start. Each step changes one thing at a time: how long it lasts, how much he leads, and how much his brother helps. Before each step, name the worry thought and what he will focus on instead.

TOP-RUNG GOAL A 1-hour get-together at home with one friend, brother nearby but not playing

Fear	Challenge	Type	How long	Who and where	Tries
5	Friend over for 1 hour; he picks the activity, brother in another room	In vivo	60 min	Home, friend	☐ ☐ ☐
5	Invite the friend himself, by phone or at school	In vivo	5 min	Friend	☐ ☐ ☐
4	Friend over for 45 minutes; brother plays the first half, then leaves	In vivo	45 min	Home, friend, brother	☐ ☐ ☐
4	Friend over for 30 minutes for a planned game, brother joins the whole time	In vivo	30 min	Home, friend, brother	☐ ☐ ☐
3	Meet the friend at a park, brother plays too, parent on a bench	In vivo	20 min	Park, brother	☐ ☐ ☐
3	Short video call with the friend, brother sitting next to him	In vivo	5 min	Home, brother	☐ ☐ ☐
2	Plan the get-together with his brother: pick two activities and a snack	In vivo	15 min	Home, brother	☐ ☐ ☐
1	Role-play saying hi and suggesting a game, with his brother playing the friend	Role-play	10 min	Home, brother	☐ ☐ ☐

Hardest at the top, first step at the bottom. Check a box each time the step is practiced; move up after two calm tries in a row.

Setting it up

Keep early get-togethers short and structured, with a game or activity ready. End while it is still going well. Talk with his brother beforehand: his job is to help get things started, then step back, not to do the talking for him.

During and after

Stay nearby but out of the way, and skip rescuing quiet moments. Afterward, praise the effort: "You asked him what he wanted to play. I noticed that." Ask what went better than the worry predicted.