

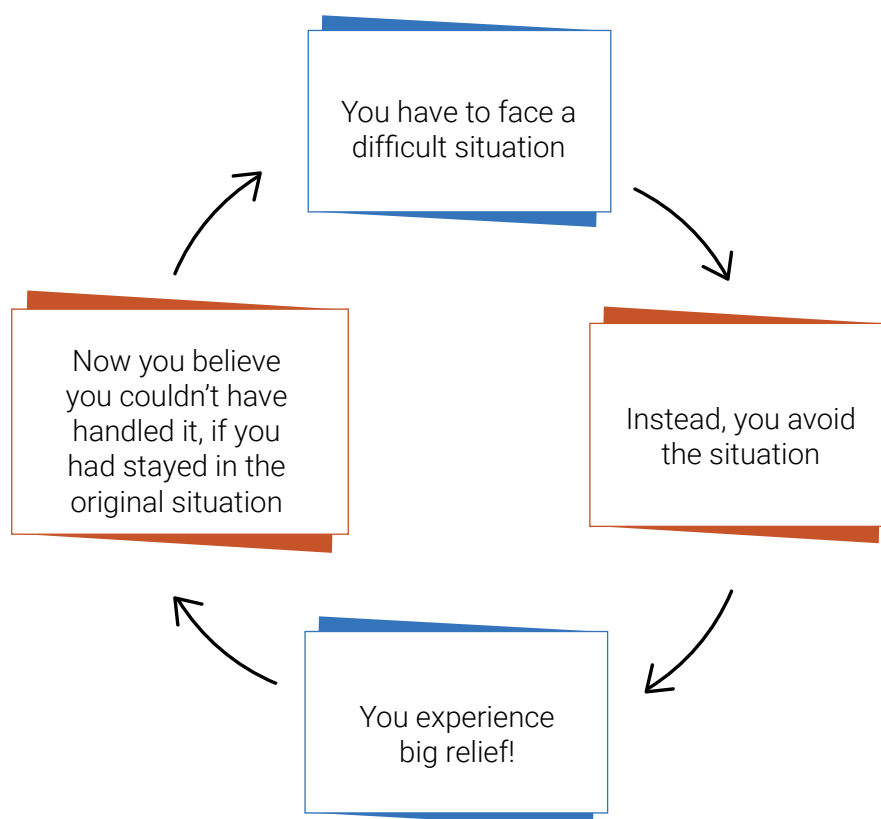
Cycle of Avoidance

What is avoidance?

Avoidance is what we do when we don't want to engage in some situation, activity, or behavior. Avoidance can be very obvious, like when we stay home from school or skip a class. But it can also be subtle, like avoiding eye contact when giving a presentation or falling asleep in class. One thing is for sure, avoidance usually feels REALLY GOOD in the short term.

So what's wrong with avoidance?

Avoidance is very tempting and usually makes anxiety better right away. It promises us immediate relief, and begins to convince us that we couldn't have coped without it. When we avoid, we teach our brain that avoidance is how we have to deal with difficult situations in order to feel better. That means that over time, my brain is going to "sound the anxiety alarm" even louder to try to get me to avoid, leaving me feeling even worse in the long-run. For example, look at the following diagram:



Example: Fear of Dogs

