

Case Studies with BAUD

Irrational Fear - Flying phobia

The subject was a 40-year-old married female who came in with a complaint of flying phobia. A mother of a 13-year-old son and a 10-year-old daughter, she has conducted a productive lifestyle as a housewife and held selling jobs. No problems were noted regarding psychological issues except for a flying phobia that has persisted since childhood.

There was no known etiology from which this fear was founded. However, the subject has only taken two airplane trips and required sedative medication. When discussing the imagery of getting on a plane, she began to hyperventilate and pulse was rapid. The plans were to take a vacation in three days and she was extremely worried about her willingness to step on the airplane. Her husband and children validated her history and reactions.

Method

The subject was shown the BAUD with a brief explanation of its use and the underlying principles. She put on the ear buds and with the device turned on, adjusted the volume pair so that she felt the noise in the center of her head and was loud but not uncomfortable.

The following transcription was as follows:

Therapist (TH): "I am turning this off so you can hear my next instruction. (Pause)
Now I want you to close your eyes and imagine stepping on that plane and tell me where
you feel it in your body."

Subject (S): "That's easy. I feel that I am going to get sick at my stomach. It knots up
right here (pointing to stomach area.)"

TH: "Okay, now see if you can hum and make a musical note that seems to resonant
there. Just hum something and see if it makes your stress there better or worse."

S: "Okay." (She hums a few notes and seems satisfied with a note.)

Clinical note: The humming and use of voice is a way of encouraging the subject to look
within her body for the source of stress. This is similar to biofeedback in the sense that the
subject is asked to image the stress sides within her body and self-regulate thorough the
use of her voice.)

TH: "You seem to have found the tone to go by. I am going to turn the device back on,
and I want you to use the upper right knob (pitch) to see if you can hear the tone you may
be using. It doesn't have to be that tone exactly. Just tune it so you feel it in your stress area.
Take a few deep breaths and relax so you can focus on feeling the tone. It may make your
stress better or worse, but all I am asking is that you locate the best tone you can."

S: (Subject searching the pitch using the upper right knob, going through the full cycle
two times. Finally she stops and nods.)

TH: "I am turning off the device so you can hear. Did you seem to find a tone or pitch
that you felt had some influence on your stress itself?"

S: "Yea, it was not exactly the same one I hummed but I could feel it."

TH: "Okay. This will be hard for you to imagine, but I want you to imagine your worse fear about flying. Close your eyes and imagine in your mind and see and even hear your worse possible horrible thought. When you do, I want you to turn this upper left knob so the fear goes away. Just erase the fear, not the image, by turning this knob. (S nods) I am turning the device on now, and erase those fears."

S: Observation of subject is slowly turning the knob with her eyes closed with a very concentrated look. Suddenly she stops turning the knob with a grin. "There that erased it."

TH: "Make the scene even worse and imagine anything else about flying you fear. Correct the knob if you want."

S: Observation of subject continues the search for new scenarios, but she is smiling. "All done. No more fear."

TH: "Okay, take a few minutes and take some deep breaths. Keep the device on and just relax. (After five minutes passed.) Okay, turn off the device and tell me how you feel."

S: "I feel deeply relaxed. I feel good, very good. It is all gone."

TH: "All gone? Can you imagine stepping on the plane? How would you feel?"

S: "Sure. (closed eyes) No fear. This is great. How long does it last?"

TH: "I don't know. Everyone is different. I guess we will see in a couple of days."

Discussion

The subject appeared happy and expressed no fear of flying, even when pressed by her family. She looked forward to the flight she was planning. I witnessed her entry into the flight in the following two days and had a mutual friend who was going on the same flight observe her behavior.

The subject reported no anxiety on the flight or any period boarding or exiting. She did not consume alcohol, and even gazed out the window on occasion. On the return flight, she sat next to an Arabian-looking gentleman who acted strange to her. This did make her anxious, but the flying experience was described as positive. She plans to go on more. At six months follow-up she consistently denies fear of flying.
