

# Case Studies with BAUD

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## *Irrational Fear – Hoarding*

The subject was a 50-year-old man who appeared on the Dr. Phil Show as a result of his daughter writing in with complaints of his hoarding. In her letter she explained that her father had hoarded so much “stuff” that they had to move out of their three-bedroom house and into a trailer home. He was in the process of hoarding that as well. The materials that he hoarded were newspaper, old school records, and boxes as well as magazines and various other things she had no idea what. He was creating so much stress in the family that his wife was on the verge of divorce.

The subject came on the show and admitted that he hoarded, but minimized the significance (of course.) He indicated that the materials he stored were things he would expect to read or use in the future. He was very reluctant to give up his materials, even when the pictures of the house were very revealing. He did agree to come in for some desensitization work for his anxiety.

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## **Method**

As expected in the assessment battery he was very high on anxiety measures in biofeedback. His finger temperature was in the 70's, his EMG readings were all above 9.0, and his respiration rate was very high (25 per minutes). He was taught breathing patterns to lower his anxiety readings, but he did not remember them by the time I saw him.

He was instructed to balance the sound levels on the two ears and to adjust the sound to a comfortable level on the BAUD. The following transcript contains the dialogue for the administration:

TH: "Could you tell me how you feel when you think of even thinking about removing all your stuff from the house?"

S: "I get kind of nervous. I mean it is a lot of stuff. I just can't empty it out all at once. Are you going to make me do that?"

TH: "No, I am not going to make you do anything, but from what I have read and listened to, this is a big problem in your life right now. What are you going to do about it?"

S: "I guess I need to, but I don't want to."

TH: "Because of the fear of losing everything, or missing something really important?"

S: "Yea, I am definitely afraid of attempting to drag it all out. I don't know where to begin."

TH: "Why don't we just reduce some of that fear and we will let Dr. Phil do the rest, OK?"

S: "How does this work?"

TH: "I want you to just imagine taking all that stuff out of your house. Just close your eyes and think about what that must feel like. Can you do that?"

S: "I can do that and I get real nervous."

TH: "Can you tell me where in your body you feel that nervousness?"

S: "Yea, right in the pit of my stomach. I feel I want to vomit."

TH: "Some people say that if you sing that nervousness will go away. Why don't we sing a tune and see if you can do that for yourself?"

Subject participates by humming a few bars of a song I didn't know. But seems to think it helped.

S: "I think that helps some.

TH: "I guess you could sing a song to lower your anxiety."

S: "I am not much of a singer. I bet the neighbors would really complain."

TH: "Let's try something with the BAUD. Think of that nervousness in your stomach and you turn that knob (upper right) and see if there is a sound that makes a difference. Go ahead and just focus on your stomach and see if you can find a knob that has some difference there."

Subject turns the knob and wanders up and down the scale.

S: "I think I have it but I am not sure."

TH: "Why don't you play around a little more, and see if you can relax enough to pick it up? Do some breathing techniques like they showed and see if that help."

S: "That does help. There, that is it."

TH: "Great! Now I want to visualize you cleaning out the house the best you can, and if you feel anxiety, turn this knob and erase them. Keep visualizing cleaning, but just eliminate those fears by finding the frequency that zaps them."

Subject looks at me with skeptical eyes but agrees to try my suggestion. He turns the knob clearly.

S1: "That is it. They went away."

TH: "Great! Now just sit there and do some deep breathing to see if they stay away. Keep cleaning that house until it is spec and span. If those fears come back, zap 'em. Keep the relaxation breathing going?"

S1: "They are gone. They are gone. How did that happen?"

TH: "I guess you relaxed yourself to deal with those demons. Are you ready to clean up your house for real? Do I make a call to start the trucks rolling?"

S1: "Absolutely. I am ready."

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## **Discussion**

The cleaning was set for the next week. When the trucks arrived, it has snowed, making the process slower. I was there, making sure that the subject was not just trying to please me. I did not want a meltdown. His family was also there. The house was a huge mess. We moved over 20 tons of materials and things, including three motorcycles and three cats.

Follow up a year later is that he is trying to rebuild his house because of the destruction by the cats and poor maintenance. However, he is not hoarding and feels that he can control his anxiety in more productive ways. The family is still stressed due to lack of progress in building the house.

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