

Management of Fear of Injections or Hypodermic Needles (Trypano-Phobia) with Brief Behaviour Technology

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ABSTRACT

Trypanophobia is an extreme fear of medical procedures involving injections or hypodermic needles. This can become sometimes life-threatening, when untreated. A Brief Behaviour Technology applied for treating a married female client aged 36, a mother, who had borne three children through normal delivery, is described in this paper. She had refused to have her blood sugar level checked by a prick on one of her fingers. She never had had been exposed to a prick by the hypodermic needle. The Brief Behaviour Technology was used in a single session within a period of 45 minutes, which included: 1. Invitation of the Threatening Stimulus. 2. Long Breathing. 3. Continuous Food Intake. 4. Continuous Water Intake. As a result of the Brief Behaviour Technology, client had voluntarily asked for a prick to check her blood sugar level.

Keywords: *Trypano-Phobia - Anxiety Reduction Techniques*

Trypanophobia is an extreme fear of medical procedures involving injections or hypodermic needles. Children are especially afraid of needles because they're unused to the sensation of their skin being pricked by something sharp. By the time most people reach adulthood, they can tolerate needles much more easily.

But for some, a fear of needles stays with them into adulthood. Sometimes this fear can be extremely intense.

Causes of Trypanophobia:

Doctors aren't exactly sure why some people develop phobias and others don't. Certain factors that lead to development of this phobia include:

1. Negative life experiences or previous trauma brought on by a specific object or situation.
2. Relatives, who've had phobias (which may be suggesting genetic or learned behavior).
3. Changes in brain chemistry.
4. Childhood phobias that have appeared by age 10.
5. A sensitive, inhibitive, or negative temperament.
6. Learning about negative information or experiences

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In the case of Trypanophobia, certain aspects of needles often cause the phobia. This may include:

1. Fainting or severe dizziness as a result of having a Vasovagal Reflex, reaction, when pricked by a needle.
2. Bad memories and anxiety, such as memories of painful injections, that can be triggered by the sight of a needle.
3. Medically related fears or hypochondria.
4. Sensitivity to pain, which tends to be genetic and causes high anxiety, blood pressure, or heart rate during medical procedures involving a needle.
5. A fear of restraint, which can be confused with Trypanophobia, because many people receiving injections are restrained.

Symptoms of Trypanophobia

The symptoms of Trypanophobia can greatly interfere with a person's quality of life. These symptoms can be so intense that they can be debilitating. Symptoms are present, when a person sees needles or is told they will have to undergo a procedure that involves needles.

Symptoms include:

1. Dizziness
2. Fainting
3. Anxiety
4. Insomnia
5. Panic attacks
6. High blood pressure
7. Racing heart rate
8. Feeling emotionally or physically violent
9. Avoiding or running away from medical care

Diagnosis of Trypanophobia:

An extreme fear of needles can interfere with doctor's ability to treat you. So, it's important to get this phobia treated.

Doctor will first rule out any physical illness by performing a medical exam. Then they may recommend that the client is examined by a mental health care specialist. The specialist will ask questions about one's mental and physical health histories. They will also ask to describe the symptoms.

A diagnosis of Trypanophobia is usually made if a fear of needles has interfered in some part of your life.

Complications of Trypanophobia:

Trypanophobia could result in stressful episodes that may or may not involve panic attacks. It may also lead to a delay in necessary medical treatment. This could hurt the client, if he/she has a chronic condition or experience a medical emergency.

Treatment Techniques:

The goal of treatment for Trypanophobia is to address the underlying cause of one's phobia. So, the treatment may differ from client to client.

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Most people with Trypanophobia are recommended some kind of Behaviour Therapy as their treatment. This could include:

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT):

This involves exploring one's fear of needles in therapy sessions and learning techniques to cope with it. The Therapist will help the client to learn different ways to think about his/her fears and how it could affect them. In the end, the client should walk away feeling a confidence or mastery over one's thoughts and feelings.

Exposure Therapy:

This is similar to CBT in that it's focused on changing one's mental and physical response to one's fear of needles. The Therapist will expose the client to needles and the related thoughts they trigger. For example, the Therapist might first show the client the photos of a needle. They might next have the client stand next to a needle, hold a needle, and then perhaps imagine getting injected with a needle.

Medication is Necessary:

When a person is so stressed that they're unreceptive to Behaviour Therapy, then medication is necessary. Anti-Anxiety and sedative medications can relax one's body and brain enough to reduce the symptoms. Medications can also be used during a blood test or vaccination, if it helps to reduce one's stress.

Outlook for Trypanophobia:

The key to managing Trypanophobia is to address its underlying causes. Once the cause is identified, what makes one to be afraid of needles it is important to stick to the treatment plan. One may never get over the fear of needles, but at the very least one can learn to live with it.

METHODOLOGY

A married female client aged 36, a mother, who had borne three children through normal delivery, who had extreme fear of being pricked by a hypodermic needle is described in this paper. She never had been exposed to a prick. She had refused to have her blood sugar level checked by a prick on one of her fingers. She never had had been exposed to a prick by a hypodermic needle.

1. Invitation of the Threatening Stimulus

The client, who refused to take a prick was told that she will be pricked only, when she 'Voluntarily' asked for it (Ganesan,1980).

This technique involves:

1. Use of 'Stimulus Control Technique'. When the client is given the 'Right to Control the Threatening Stimulus' that is being pricked with a hypodermic needle, the clients anxiety level reduces.
2. The client feels that the 'Threatening Stimulus' of being pricked is not being presented by an 'External-Agent' like a Doctor or Nurse.
3. Further there is no 'Time-Urgency' created by another person for getting pricked.
4. 'Personal Choice' over the 'Temporal Efficacy' is offered.
5. Client experiences that the client's behavior is under 'One's-Own-Control'.

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6. Client learns to orchestrate one's own 'Psycho-Neuro-Physiological Responses' to the 'Threatening-Stimulus' of being pricked by a hypodermic needle.

2. *Benefits of Injections:*

The client was explained that the Modern Medical Procedures involve use of injections for intra-muscular or intra-venous types for treatment of various illnesses from fevers, injuries to life-saving treatments.

When she contracts some serious illness, she has to be saved for the sake of taking care of her husband and three children as a housewife, which may require the use of injections at least occasionally.

3. *Long Breathing:*

Client was asked to inhale and exhale in a prolonged manner, which helps in two ways:

1. Expulsion of the 'Stress/Anxiety-Related-Gases' from the lung, failing which they will be reabsorbed and escalate the stress level in the blood.
2. Ingestion of more quantum of air and oxygen, and enrichment of oxygen in the blood, which will help in the 'Reduction of Stress/Anxiety Levels.'

4. *Continuous Food Intake:*

The Client was asked to consume Halwa, a sweet food again and again continuously. This involves Reciprocal Inhibition (Wolpe, 1973), which evokes relaxation response caused by food intake as a competing stimulus against anxiety.

This had helped in:

- Engaging in a 'Pleasurable-Experience', that results, in the development of 'Reciprocal-Inhibition' of a 'Unpleasant-Experience' of being pricked with a hypodermic needle.
- The digestion process relaxes the Psycho-Neuro-Physiological-Processes that trigger Stress /Anxiety-Responses.

5. *Continuous Water Intake:*

The Client was asked to consume water, again and again continuously. This had helped in:

- Diluting the concentration of anxiety related hormones present in the blood.
- The H₂O in water will increase the oxygen levels in the blood that will stimulate the left brain to have a rational perception of the benefits being injected than being regulated by the emotional right brain towards the experiencing of the pain caused by the injection.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The client had voluntarily requested for being pricked on one of her fingers for testing her blood sugar level. The results of the test showed that she was not diabetic, which made her to feel happy. Her phobia towards injection had disappeared and she felt confident and happy about the therapeutic outcome.

CONCLUSION

The fear of the client of being injected with a hypodermic needle was treated using a Brief Behaviour Technology Module used that had resulted in the total relief from the feat.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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