

New Cognitive Therapy Successful with ADHD

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A new cognitive behavioral therapy successfully reduced symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) in young people between the ages of 6 and 16.

The authors followed the earlier work of Dr. Gaethke-Brandt who employed subliminal audio messages with ADHD patients and had limited success. As a part of her Master of Counselling program through the University of Phoenix, Roche teamed up with Dr. Eldon Taylor of Progressive Awareness Research. Taylor's work with cognitive engineering (changing self-talk) through the means of audio subliminal communication has been successful in prior studies conducted in domains such as test anxiety, stress, depression, and cognitive organization. (1986, 1987, 1994).

Together, the authors developed affirmations designed to counteract the self-talk assumed to be inherent to sufferers of ADHD. The researchers believed that this self-talk delimited self-belief and thereby acted, at the very least, to reinforce and reproduce ADHD behavior. Further, it was assumed that until self-belief/self-image alters, behavior is continually habitualized. The authors chose a method of cognitive engineering to test their hypothesis.

The philosophy of cognitive engineering was originally conceived of in the mid-fifties. The theory behind this form of behavioral therapy is stated by Roche in her thesis as, "by disputing irrational beliefs and replacing them with rational, realistic, and positive statements, behavior change is effected." (1993). She continues by offering a simple model which she credits to Albert Ellis (1988). The A-B-C model as it is called, is graphically depicted as follows:

A-----> B-----> C

(Activating event) (Belief) (Consequence/ emotional & behavioral)

These authors assert that by changing the belief, a method which can be done by subliminal statements which bypass critical or conscious awareness and become internalized as self-talk, or what the senior author refers to in his book, *Subliminal Learning*, as "semantic priming," an activating event will pass through a different lens and result in a different interpretation of the event. This difference in interpretation changes expectation which defines many emotional and behavioral responses. Additionally, this semantic priming of self-talk can provide an impetus for changing self-belief. The two factors combine to re-enforce each other, theoretically leading to long-term behavioral changes.

The study was conducted as a double-blind where only Taylor knew which tape (tape A or B) contained what messages and Roche knew which subjects received the respective tapes. Custodians of the young people involved in the study were also blind as to whether the tape they had contained the research messages or the control message. The research messages, or affirmations, were first person statements such as, "*I concentrate, I focus my attention, I choose to learn, I am good*" and so forth. The control tape had only one message and this was considered to be a neutral message: "*People are walking.*"

Before beginning the listening exercise, children were rated by a parent or caregiver using the ADHD rating scales. Scores can range from 0 to 42. Group A's (experimental group) pre-test scores ranged from 25 to 41 with a mean score of 32.67. Group B's (placebo group) scores ranged from 10 to 42 with a mean score of 25.13. The subliminal audio tapes created for the study used the mirrored information processing theory of the senior author (1992, 1994). Therefore, affirmations were simultaneously presented in permissive forward on the right channel and authoritarian reverse on the left channel. For example, the right channel may have a message such as "It's okay to be good," while the left channel contained in reverse speech the message, "I am good." All affirmations were recorded at between 4 and 10 db beneath the primary carrier (the sound of brook) using a patented method and apparatus developed by the senior author. (US #07 / 440,244).

The results of the study showed a strong statistical decline in ADHD symptoms as rated in pre and post conditions by caregivers ($P=.01$). The caregivers reported that their children missed some days of the thirty-day listening period. After the listening period, the mean score

for group A was 23.58. This represents a mean difference of 9.08 with a t score of .0035, $p > .10$. However, there were reports of an abreactive nature (psychological resistance). Some caregivers reported a worsening of conditions during the experiment, although by the conclusion of the thirty-day usage of the audio taped subliminal messages, only one subject listening to the experimental tape had worsened compared to five in the control group.

Subjects' response to the tapes varied. The following comments are generally representative of caregiver reports:

- "S has progressed very well this month—he is working hard on his reading (more attentive) and seems to take direction better. His anger has seemed to be under better control."
- "D felt a change in his study habits the first time he used it! Was able to study for four hours uninterrupted. He loves the tape and continues to use it in summer school. He wants more tapes! I see a positive difference when used."
- "Client has become more agitated and less controllable. Client hated his tape. He said it frustrated him because he couldn't tell what they were saying in the background. Client became whiny and it took longer for the staff to calm him down."
- "C looked forward in the evening to playing the tape. When agitated, would play it on his own."

The study enlisted thirty-two children volunteered by their caregivers. The children were randomly assigned to two different groups. The researchers caution that the literature seems to indicate that most commercially prepared subliminal self-help tapes are ineffective (NRC, 1991). Therefore, it appears that the method of presenting the subliminal messages, and the content of the subliminal material greatly impacts their effectiveness as a treatment modality."

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