COMMON LANGUAGE for PSYCHOTHERAPY (clp) PROCEDURES
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MINDLAB SET COPING SKILLS TRAINING

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Definition: MindLAB Set is a feedback device to help people learn to reduce arousal to and avoidance of aversive sounds.

Elements: During therapy sessions patients use the MindLAB Set device to learn coping skills including mindfulness by putting on headphones and listening to irregular repetitions of the same aversive 80dB sounds resembling fire alarms while seeing, on a PC screen, their skin conductance responses (SCRs) indicating arousal to those sounds. The SCRs are monitored by one electrode on each of two fingers of the patients' dominant hand. The electrodes are linked to a *Psychodata Acquisition Unit* which can monitor and process SCRs. This *Unit* is connected to a PC which analyses the SCRs using the software programs *MindSCAN* and *Psychofeedback*. While hearing the aversive sounds, patients see their SCRs on the PC screen and usually ask for the sounds to be stopped (avoided). After Session 1 the therapist shows the patients their SCRs on the PC screen to see that they avoided arousal to aversive sounds. The therapist suggests that the patients start *MindLAB Set Coping Skills Training* (done in the therapist's presence) while trying to reduce their arousal when hearing discomfiting sounds by breathing slowly, relaxing muscles, and changing their internal dialogue e.g. from '*I'll go crazy if I don't stop it!* ' to '*I'll stay calm during these sounds; they're not dangerous and I won't overreact'*. Training typically takes 10-15 sessions of visual feedback of SCRs to a mean of 10 aversive sounds per session in order to learn to cope with those. As patients learn to reduce arousal over successive sessions they feel a growing sense of mastery which they see in cross-session comparisons of SCRs on the PC screen. The patients are encouraged to generalize effective coping reactions to any unpleasant real-world experiences by using MindLAB Set Coping Skills Training in order to reduce avoidance.

Related procedures**:** *Biofeedback*, *Coping skills training*, Mastery, *Skills-directed therapy, Self-control skills training*, *Stress immunisation.*

Application: Done individually.

1st use? Scrimali (2002 - cited in Scrimali 2010).

References:

1. Scrimali T (2008). Entropy of Mind and Negative Entropy. Karnac Books, London
2. Scrimali T (2010). Neuroscienze e Psicologia Clinica. Franco Angeli Editore, Milano
3. Scrimali T (2011). Il Vincolo della Dipendenza. Franco Angeli Editore, Milano
4. Scrimali T (2012). Neuroscience-Based Cognitive Therapy. Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford, 2012

Case illustration (Scrimali 2011)

Giusy had long feared and avoided travelling alone by car outside her small town because that evoked anxiety compelling her to return home. At the start of Session

1 of MindLAB Set Coping Skills Training, her skin-conductance responses (SCRs) to discomfiting 80dB sounds like those of fire alarms showed that she became very aroused when hearing such sounds on MindLAB Set headphones plugged into a PC. She asked for the aversive sounds to be stopped after hearing just 4 such sounds (10 aversive sounds are usually played in each session). The therapist explained that such avoidance increases anxiety over time and that her frequent SCRs indicated undue fear when hearing aversive sounds. In subsequent sessions Giusy practised self-control by trying to reduce her SCRs which she saw on the PC screen while hearing aversive sounds on MindLAB Set headphones. By the end of Session 6 she said her sense of mastery had improved. After 10 weekly sessions of MindLAB Set Coping Skills Training with visual SCR feedback she managed to tolerate hearing all 10 aversive sounds without asking that they be stopped. Finally, Giusy applied her new coping skills between sessions to her own environment even though MindLAB Set could not be used there. She learned to drive her car alone to a small town near where she lived. Gradually Giusy lengthened the distances she would drive alone until without problems she went on a highway on a trip lasting over 2 hours. At six-month follow up she had remained well, without any avoidance or escape.