

Report

PHYSIOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF A MIND/BODY THERAPY ON CLAUSTROPHOBIA

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ABSTRACT

A preliminary study was conducted to quantify the effects of a specific form of therapeutic intervention on claustrophobia using methods from an emerging field called Energy Psychology which uses the acupuncture system to reduce or eliminate irrational anxiety and fears. The treatment includes a form of self-applied acupressure and focused thought, plus structured breathing exercises to effect a rapid desensitization of the feared object or situation. Four claustrophobic and four normal individuals were recruited. The claustrophobic individuals were measured with the State Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) and physiological measures of EEG, EMG, heart rate, respiration, and measures of the electro-conductance within the acupuncture meridians. The results when compared with normal individuals showed that a 30-minute treatment appeared to create reduction in EMG for the trapezius muscle; changes of EEG, Theta wave activity and changes in the electrical conductance between acupuncture points in a meridian pathway.

The measures pre and post-treatment on the STAI for the experimental group were significantly lower even at a two week follow-up. This pilot study suggests that specific physiological and psychological changes occur for claustrophobic individuals after an energy psychology treatment. Further investigation appears warranted.

KEYWORDS: Acupuncture, acupressure, claustrophobia, energy psychology, fears, phobias, treatment