Treatment Strategies for Anxiety Disorders

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Anxiety Disorders

- Separation Anxiety Disorder
- Selective Mutism
- Specific Phobia
- Social Anxiety Disorder (Social Phobia)
- Panic Disorder
- Agoraphobia
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder
- Substance/Medication Induced Anxiety Disorder
- Anxiety Disorder Due to Another Medical Condition

What is Anxiety?

- A feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease typically about an immanent event or an uncertain outcome.

Common Symptoms of Anxiety Disorders

- Muscle Tension
- Worry
- Hyperventilation
- Dizziness
- Sweating
- Irritability
- Sleep Disturbance

These symptoms must be present for a minimum of six months. In addition, symptoms must be present more days than not. Adults will meet the criteria for this diagnosis if three of the symptoms have been met for the designated period of time. Children must meet one symptom for the designated period of time.

Therapeutic Strategies for Treating Anxiety

- Exposure Therapy

- Progressive Muscle Relaxation

- Social Skills Training

- Cognitive Restructuring

- Medicinal Therapies

Exposure Therapies

- Flooding

- Systematic Desensitization

- Exposure therapy presents the anxiety trigger in a step-by-step format or in one immediate presentation

Flooding

- Flooding is an exposure technique implemented to present the anxiety causing stimuli at one time without a gradual build up to resistance toward the stimuli

Flooding Explained

- If someone was fearful of snakes the clinician would bring a live snake for them to hold. This therapeutic model allows the client to be presented with their primary fear at one time. The goal of this technique is to overcome fear by being directly exposed to the stimuli at one time which in-turn will build resistance and the trigger will no longer be active.

Systematic Desensitization

- Systematic Desensitization is a therapeutic model that gradually presents the client with the stimuli in a sequential method to allow the client to build a resistance toward the primary fear

Systematic Desensitization Explained

- If someone is fearful of flying the clinician would
- Identify the lowest level of fear producing triggers (e.g. picture of a plane)
- Integrate relaxation techniques simultaneously with the presentation of the fear-inducing stimuli
- Travel to an airport
- Take a trip on a plane
- This is a brief model of the step-by-step implementation of systematic desensitization.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

- Progressive muscle relaxation is a therapeutic technique used to reduce anxiety.

- The clinician has the client relax and begin taking deep breaths.

- The clinician has the client use visual imagery to further induce relaxation (e.g. visualizing a calm setting).

- The clinician directs the client to tense and release each muscle group incrementally from feet to head while simultaneously deep breathing and using visual imagery.

Social Skill Training

- Social skill training is a therapeutic technique in which the clinician assists the client in improving their social interaction (verbally, physically, and body language).

Social Skills Training

- Role play, modeling, and social skill development are strategies used to develop or enhance the client's social skills. Roleplay is conducted to demonstrate social settings that may cause anxiety for the client. In addition, the client and the clinician play out these social interactions which in-turn allows the client to develop effective coping strategies for these settings.

Modeling

- Modeling is when the clinician demonstrates the appropriate behavior or social interaction in a specific setting or circumstance. The client then exhibits the appropriate behavior. Modeling is demonstrated until the client becomes comfortable exhibiting the appropriate behavior. Finally, the client must implement the learned behavior in real-life settings to fully master the skill.

Cognitive Restructuring

- Cognitive restructuring is a therapeutic model implemented to identify maladaptive thought processes and to develop healthy and rational thought patterns. Clinicians work with clients to identify negative or irrational beliefs which trigger anxiety. This process is initiated via Socratic questioning, real-world experiments, cognitive disputation, and reframing.

Socratic Questioning

- Socratic Questioning is a philosophical method that protests assumptions to identify alternate ways of thinking. Clinicians use this line of questioning to help clients develop alternate ways of viewing distressful situations.

- Example: Do you think there could be any other alternate beliefs besides the one you currently hold?

- Why do you believe what you believe?

Cognitive Disputation

- Cognitive Disputation is a therapeutic model in which the clinician challenges the client's irrational beliefs. The clinician identifies faulty thought patterns that the client believes and disputes these beliefs.

Real-World Experiments

- Real-World experiments are conducted subsequent to identifying the client's maladaptive thinking. The client engages in the fear-inducing activity to test their hypothesis about the outcome of their activity. In addition, this is done after the client and clinician have identified anxiety triggers and developed coping strategies to manage the client's anxiety.

Medicinal Therapy

There are various medications to **manage** Anxiety Disorders. These medications can be classified in two categories Anti-Anxiety and Anti-Depressants.   These medications alter the brain chemistry to reduce symptoms of worry, irritability, and panic.

List of Common Benzodiazepines

- Ativan
- Xanex
- Valium
- Klonopin

List of Common Anti- Depressants

- Lexapro
- Paxil
- Prozak
- Effoxor
- Cymbolta
- Zoloft

All medications may have side effects but may not effect everyone in the same way.

Common Side Effects for Medicinal Therapy

- Drowsiness

- Irritability

- Nausea

- Head Ache

Overview

- Anxiety Disorders are the most common mental illnesses and can be treated in many different ways. The first line of treatment with concern to anxiety is managing stress. This can be done via exercise, spending time with friends and family, work/social balance, and not committing one's self to too many projects. If your symptoms do not decrease subsequent to implementing these strategies, seek help from a mental health professional.