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Imagery in therapy: an information processing analysis of fear *

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An analysis of fear imagery in behavior therapy is developed from the combined perspectives of information processing theory and psychophysiology. Recent thought on imagery processing and storage is considered, and it is argued that affective images are best viewed as propositional structures rather than as iconic or holistic sensory representations. A method is presented for manipulating the image through instructions, and an image taxonomy of stimulus and response components is described. The usefulness of bioelectric measurement is emphasized throughout, and this is illustrated in an experiment derived from the "constructive" concept of imagery. The implications of this approach are then developed for behavior modification research: Desensitization and flooding are analyzed, comparisons are made among media, imaginal, and *in vivo* fear treatments, and the significance of image analysis is elucidated for both overt and covert modeling. In conclusion, a general model for fear processing is described and directions for future research are outlined.



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