



COMMON LANGUAGE for PSYCHOTHERAPY (clp) PROCEDURES
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PARADOX

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Definition: The therapist asks the patient to do the very thing s/he's been trying to avoid.

Elements: When using paradoxical intention, the therapist asks clients to deliberately experience whatever they've been trying to not do.

Related Procedures: Symptom prescription.

Application: Anxiety disorders, couple therapy, eating disorders, hypochondriasis, panics, reactive depression, sexual disorders.

1st Use? Bateson et al (1956)

References:

1. Bateson G, Jackson DD, Haley J, Weakland J, (1956) Toward a theory of schizophrenia. *Behavioral Science*, 1: 251-264.
2. Selvini Palazzoli M, Boscolo L, Cecchin G, Prata G (2003) *Paradosso e Controparadosso*, Raffaello Cortina, Milano.
3. Haley J (1963) *Strategies of Psychotherapy*, Grune & Stratton, New York.
4. Nardone G (2008) *Solcare il Mare All'insaputa del Cielo*, Ponte Alle Grazie, Firenze.

Case Illustration: A man of 40 became certain that he had a serious heart problem and would soon die, despite many medical examinations and tests suggesting he was in good health. He was convinced that he had a rare, hard-to-identify disease. In session 3 the therapist said she fully agreed with him, no one knows what happens in our body, everyone can recognize symptoms not evident to doctors. The patient felt finally understood. When asked if he'd taken steps to help his family after his death, he replied that he'd done nothing. I blamed him and asked him to act as a serious protective father, to take out insurance so his children could continue their studies after he died, to resolve any inheritance problems, and to write a will. The patient left the session relieved that someone at last understood him and that he finally knew what to do. At the next session he was smiling and peaceful, saying that he'd immediately gone to an insurance company to ask about insurance policies. He then returned home and sat at his desk writing his will. After he'd written most of it he felt what he was doing was absurd and that he had no problem, and destroyed the paper.