



COMMON LANGUAGE for PSYCHOTHERAPY (clp) PROCEDURES
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SELF-PRAISE TRAINING

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Definition: A way of teaching passive people to say appropriately positive things about themselves without boasting, or fear of bragging, or crumbling if listeners are critical, and to sound like other healthy people sharing information.

Elements: In role rehearsal, the therapist first teaches the client to ‘convert’ other people’s comments into relevant self-praise e.g. if someone says ‘Hey, Garrett, my day today was great’, the client replies with a remark that is relevant and converts the topic to something nice about him/herself e.g. ‘I’m so pleased to hear that. I also had a great day today and really enjoyed the weather.’ Next, clients are taught to ‘shift’ conversation more markedly to something positive about themselves after acknowledging what has been said e.g. on hearing ‘I really got annoyed today at my boss’ the client acknowledges with a transitional “Gee, sorry to hear that. How awful. I hope things get better at work” and then invites a new topic, which is positive about themselves, e.g. “May I tell you what happened today? My kids bought me 2 concert tickets for my birthday next week.’ The client practises converting and shifting daily for a month in varied company (men, women, older, younger, etc.). Finally the client rehearses and then directly solicits somebody else’s opinion e.g. “Do you like my scarf/new car etc?” If the reply is critical, self-praisers are told to just say “thank you”.

Related Procedures: covert desensitization, *assertiveness training*, *social skills training*, social disinhibition, *role rehearsal*, *exposure*.

Application: passive (unassertive, introvert) adults and adolescents, adult children of alcoholic families and family abuse, in homes, residential facilities, colleges, schools, and hospitals.

1st Use? Ruben DH (1992)

References:

1. Ruben DH (1992) Interbehavioral analysis of adult children of alcoholics: etiological predictors. *Alcoholism Treatment Quarterly*, *9*, 1-21.
2. Ruben DH (1993) *No More Guilt: Ten Steps to a Shame-free Life*. Bedford, MA: Mills & Sanderson
3. Ruben DH (2000) *Treating adult children of alcoholics: A behavioral approach*. NY: Academic Press

Case Illustration

Maggie aged 35 feared talking in crowds or in front of coworkers, kept quiet during conversations, and always agreed with what people said. She felt her opinions were stupid, that she had no good qualities, and put herself down even if praised by others e.g. when told her dress looked lovely she instantly said ‘Not really, It’s a hand-me-down from my older sister and looks old and ugly on me.’ This relieved her fear of being scrutinised and seeming to brag. In her first week of self-praise training a therapist role-rehearsed with her how to ‘convert’ people’s comments into something relevant and good in her life e.g. if a friend said ‘I have to plant my garden today’

Maggie might reply 'Yes, I love planting. I also really like cutting the grass' Maggie practised such 'conversions' for a week between sessions. The therapist then role-rehearsed with her 'shifting' conversation more markedly to saying something positive about herself e.g. if a friend said 'I went to a new hamburger restaurant yesterday and it was good', Maggie might reply 'That's nice, I hope the food was good there. I'll have to check it out.'" She immediately goes on to say 'Incidentally, I must tell you about the guy I'm dating; he's so neat!'. Maggie rehearsed such shifting in real life for a week. Finally she role-rehearsed a task she found very hard - soliciting others for compliments, e.g. 'Do you like the color of my sweater?'. If people said they liked it, she thanked them without her former self-put-downs. She rehearsed soliciting compliments for a week. After nearly a month of practising self-compliments, Maggie found it easier to start conversations, not be put off by unflattering remarks, and acknowledge nice things people said of her. Her former severe anxiety dropped, and she became a regular contributor to impromptu conversations.