

Highly effective well-established psychological treatments: behaviour therapy for specific phobias (pp. 481-502)

Mireia Orgilés, Ana I. Rosa, Isabel Santacruz, Xavier Méndez, José Olivares,
and Julio Sánchez-Meca
University of Murcia (Spain)

A meta-analysis was performed on the effectiveness of psychological treatment for specific phobias in childhood and adolescence. Fourteen scientific reports appeared between 1960 and 2002, fulfilling the selection criteria, were identified leading to 42 independent studies. Six hundred and sixty-two children between the ages of 3 and 17 years, with a mean age of 8 years and an average disorder duration of 3.6 years, took part. The psychological treatment for the specific phobias was highly effective ($d+= 0.97$), with further improvement in the follow-up ($d+= 1.21$). The effective procedures coincided with those most frequently used: modeling ($d+= 1.99$), mainly used in sub-clinical samples with animal phobias; exposure ($d+= 1.21$), used more with clinical samples and a wide range of phobias (animals, environmental, dental, etc.), and combined programs ($d+= 1.47$), applied to both types of samples that showed, above all, phobia to darkness. Response to treatment was better in the youngest children, in girls, in animal phobias, in cases without related problems and in phobias of recent appearance. The clinical implication of these findings are discussed.