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The Long-term Effectiveness of the Desensitization of Ophidiophobia

Many are affected by ophidiophobia, the fear of snakes. The project in its present form is an experiment on the effectiveness of a desensitization process for ophidiophobia, and in the future, an experiment on the long-term effectiveness of the desensitization process after a period of one year. The initial hypothesis was that the desensitization process is more effective in females and children. The desensitization process consisted of a question and answer formatted educational class, and also exposure to different species of non-venomous snakes for three hours over a period of two consecutive days. The level of fear was measured with a heart-rate monitor. Males and adults were observably more hesitant near the snakes during the first exposure before the desensitization … males showing a 55.9% increase in heart rate, and adults showing a 40.9% increase as opposed to females, a 13.5% increase, and children a 17.6% increase. But contradictory to the hypothesis, post-desensitization heart rates show that there was a 157.7% decrease in heart rate in males, a 149.1% decrease in adults, as opposed to only a 33.31% decrease in females, and a 40.5% decrease in children. The long-term effectiveness of the procedure is yet to be tested. The results found raise the question as to why females and children show a lesser decrease in heart rate or “fear”, even though they initially showed less “fear” than their counterparts before desensitization.