

Dibbets, P., Poort, H., & Arntz, A. (2011). Adding imagery rescripting during extinction leads to less ABA renewal. *Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry*, 43, 614-624.

Objective: Although extinction is highly effective in reducing a conditioned fear response, return of the fear response (renewal) outside the extinction context often occurs. The present study investigated whether US devaluation, through imagery rescripting during extinction, resulted in less renewal than mere extinction.

Method: Seventy psychology students were subjected to a fear conditioning paradigm. During fear acquisition CS+ was always followed by the US, whereas CS- was never followed by the US. For all groups the acquisition phase took place in context A. During extinction both CS+ and CS- were offered, but no US was presented. For three groups extinction was conducted in a different context, context B (ABA groups). The fourth group received extinction in the acquisition context (AAA group) in order to demonstrate that renewal indeed took place. During extinction, participants received either an imagery rescripting (IR) instruction to devalue the US (ABA_{ir}), a US-unrelated imagination instruction to assess the general influence of imagination (ABA_{cont}), or no instruction at all (ABA_{no} and AAA_{no}). Subsequently, testing occurred for all groups in the acquisition context A.

Results: The results indicated that renewal of the US expectancy ratings was reduced if imagery rescripting (ABA_{ir}) was added to mere extinction (ABA_{no}). Next to the reduction in renewal, imagery rescripting (ABA_{ir}) also resulted in the devaluation of the US valence, indicating that the mental representation of the US had changed. These findings are not only in line with contemporary conditioning theories, but also suggest that adding imagery rescripting to extinction might be beneficial in the treatment of anxiety problems.