

COURSE LEADERS SCRIPT FOR TENSION CONTROL TRAINING (TCT)

LLTTF course (2nd edition)

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Introduction

Tension Control Training is based on an approach designed by my late colleague Dr Philip Snaith to enable people to learn control over tension. We've changed the content to help people relax both their bodies and minds.

This script has been developed for use by professional health care workers. The approach can be offered to individuals or to groups of people and is a time-efficient and often very effective form of support. It can be added in to other sessions with the individual concerned and lasts about ten minutes on each occasion. To teach TCT you would usually see the person for face to face sessions at approximately weekly intervals for 6-8 weeks and this could be used one to one or in a group/class setting. The person needs to also practice the approach by themselves (using the CD or audio files described below) once or twice a day between the sessions with you.

There are two main parts to the TCT treatment approach:

1. In the first two or three sessions, the **first version** of Tension Control Training is used. This helps the person replace anxious feelings with calm feelings during the session.
2. When they feel confident in version 1, you should jointly move on to the **second version** of Tension Control Training where the person is encouraged to begin to think about slightly stressful events. They then learn to control the anxiety this causes.

You should provide anyone you work with using this approach with a copy of the *Using Tension Control Training Handout*.

We suggest that you consider recording sessions using your own voice.

Please note:

Although Tension Control training can be a useful way of helping a person counter problems of anxiety and worry, it is important that it is offered appropriately. A range of other psychiatric (e.g. depression, schizophrenia, dementia, alcohol problems etc) and physical (such as heart problems, diabetes, thyroid problems and the side effects of medication) health problems can cause anxiety-like presentations. People with significant tension/anxiety should therefore have an assessment by an appropriately qualified practitioner to ensure the most appropriate support is offered.

You may find it helpful to encourage the person to rate their mood using the Smiley faces mood rating worksheet or other suitable measure to record their progress.

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Delivering TCT

Firstly encourage the person to find a comfortable position and to fix their eyes on some point in the room. They may close their eyes if they wish, but this should be their choice. The key is to encourage them to concentrate on the words that you are saying and to allow the relaxation to occur. It is best if you speak with a quiet and monotonous voice. Try to pace the session, with gaps between sentences used in the script to allow this to happen.

The aim is to have a session that lasts between five and ten minutes. Longer periods of attention are difficult to sustain. In general, in the first few sessions, the plan is to teach the patient to firstly draw attention to bodily sensations and then use mental imagery to learn the skill of relaxation. They are encouraged to form an image of something they find relaxing. This may be a memory of a holiday, flowers, countryside, a happy memory from the past etc. They do not have to let you know what this is if they don't wish.

It may take two to three sessions or more to begin to learn this first stage of TCT, but once learned, they are ready to move on to the **second form** described below. In this second form of TCT, the person is encouraged to go first to the relaxed situation, and then to move on to think about a situation that is slightly stressful and disquieting. They should decide what this is – and only choose a topic area they feel comfortable with. Again they do not have to let you know what this is if they don't wish. They then learn to control this anxious feeling by going back to the relaxed situation and image.

TCT should occur at a pace that the person feels confident in. Sometimes some people find they become more anxious as they think about trying to relax. If this happens, check with them whether they are trying to envisage situations that initially cause too much anxiety. In which case they should be encouraged to instead choose things which create less distress until their confidence improves. If they continue to feel more anxious or experience high anxiety you should advise them to take advice from you or another health care practitioner before using the approach again.

An important part of the programme is to also identify extreme and unhelpful thoughts that are contributing to their anxiety. The purpose of tension control training is not to help the person avoid challenging these thoughts, but instead it is a supplement to other aspects of treatment. The key is that they can begin to learn skills that they can use in everyday life to reduce their anxiety. They can learn other skills in responding differently to worry etc. using other resources in the course.

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Tension Control Training script

Just resting comfortably back, letting your gaze rest upon the point you have chosen, just listening to my voice, and as the meditation continues your eyes may wish to close in order to enjoy deeper calm, in which case they will.

Just think first about your hands, just thinking about the position of your hands and any slight contact or pressure of the palms of your hands, the tips of your fingers and any feelings of warmth or coolness. Just being aware of the temperature of the skin of your hands, whether they are warm or cool and any other feelings you may notice, perhaps slight tingling feelings in your hands and so on.

And now your arms, the position of your arms. Your shoulders resting back against the chair, just becoming aware of any tension or tightness in the muscles of your arms around your shoulders and neck, tension or tightness now becoming replaced by relaxation so your arms now begin to feel limp and relaxed. Lift up your shoulders and hold them there for a short time. Then as you breathe out, drop your shoulders down. Just letting relaxation come, your arms limp and relaxed – just dropping your shoulders down and letting controlled relaxation begin to come all through your body, not resisting it, but just inviting this controlled relaxation.

Now your feet and legs. Just like your hands and arms, first your feet and all the feelings you notice there, the position of your feet, the warmth or coolness - just being aware of the temperature of the skin of your feet, whether they are warm or cool, and other feelings, - tingling feelings and so forth. Stretch out your legs and feet, then put them gently on the floor. Notice the position of your legs, any pressure in the back of your legs, just being aware of any tightness there being replaced by relaxation, just like your arms, limp and relaxed.

And the muscles of your stomach and chest. Knotted up tension feelings being replaced by relaxation, just sinking back deeper into the relaxation, not resisting it, but inviting controlled relaxation.

And now your face muscles around your forehead and eyes, frowning tension being replaced by smooth relaxation, your forehead muscles smooth and relaxed.

Many people like to let their eyes close at this stage in order to enjoy deeper relaxation, - you do what you like whether your eyes are open or closed, whatever is most comfortable.

Now be aware of the muscles of your jaws, clenching teeth tension being replaced by relaxation, a deep controlled calm relaxation all through you and taking time to enjoy this control, your control over tension.

And now let's come into your mind's eye, a picture, a calm picture whether it is somewhere you know, a holiday, a place, a pet or flowers, - whatever you choose, just what you want, your picture, and through the picture deeper still into controlled calm relaxation. The more you practice this technique you'll find it easier and easier to bring on these deep controlled calm feelings.



Tension Control Training script endings

(Finish the script with one of the following two endings –
Ending 1 in weeks 1-3, Ending 2 after that)

Version 1 Ending

“Now I am going to stop talking altogether and you just continue with your calm controlled relaxation for a little longer and then in your own time, just when it suits you, bring the session to an end. In your own time.

[End]

Version 2 Ending

“You are now in your calm relaxed scene in full control over tension, but shortly you will leave the calm scene and go over to a situation that makes you feel a little uncomfortable. As you begin to do this, try and form a clear picture in your mind of that situation and be aware of what it is about that situation that is uncomfortable. It might be a situation where you notice more symptoms- or where you feel tense or stressed. As you see yourself in the situation, be aware of what you are doing and how others are reacting.

As you begin to feel a little uncomfortable you can control that feeling by letting the words “calm control” go through your mind, the words “calm control”, controlling tension, allowing you to move back to the calm, controlled, relaxed scene. And as you continue with this practice you will find you have more and more confidence in your ability to control feelings of tension in everyday life by just thinking the words “calm control” whenever you start to feel anxious. The words “calm control” moving you back to your calm, relaxed feeling. Now I am going to stop talking altogether, and you just continue with your calm controlled relaxation for a little longer, then in your own time, when it suits you, bring the session to an end. Just in your own time.

[End]

References:

Snaithe, R.P. (1998). Meditation and Psychotherapy, *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 173, 193-196.