

Appendix E

Polygraph Metaphor

Hayes, S. C., Strosahl, K. & Wilson, K. G. (1999)

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy: An Experiential Approach to Behavior Change.
New York: Guilford Press, p. 123

Suppose I had you hooked up to the best polygraph machine that's ever been built. This is a perfect machine, the most sensitive ever made. When you are all wired up to it, there is no way you can be aroused or anxious without the machine's knowing it. So I tell you that you have a very simple task here: All you have to do is stay relaxed. If you get the least bit anxious, however, I will know it. I know that you want to try hard, but I want to give you an extra incentive, so I also have a .44 Magnum, which I will hold to your head. If you just stay relaxed, I won't blow your brains out, but if you get nervous (and I'll know it because you're wired up to this perfect machine), I'm going to have to kill you. So, just relax!... What do you think would happen?... Guess what you'd get?... The tiniest bit of anxiety would be terrifying. You'd naturally be saying, 'Oh, my gosh! I'm getting anxious! Here it comes!' BAMM! How could it work otherwise?