

Exercise 19 - Semantic Satiation

This complicated psychological phrase means wearing down the associated meaning of the thought by repeating the thought over and over again until it starts to sound and feel like a detached word or sequence of words. To illustrate this, start by saying the words “I am a creep”. Notice the feelings, images and sensations that are associated with the words “I am a creep”.

Now say the words repeatedly for two minutes without pausing.

After two minutes of repeating the words “I am a creep”, what did you notice about the actual sound or structure of the words? How did the process of repeating the words in this way alter the impact or feelings associated with the words? We thought it sounded a bit like “Pie amacree”.

When we repeat words or thoughts in this way, we break the normal rules of language. A word like “creep” can have a loaded meaning and carry negative feelings. Repeatedly saying the word for two minutes violates the normal rules of language usage. This breaks the association and returns the word “creep” to its component sounds.

Write a negative or unwanted thought in the box. Now repeat the thought as often as you can for two minutes.

Thought	Meaning	Feeling	Physical Sensations

How did repeating the thought for two full minutes alter the meaning, feelings and sensations associated with the thought?