**Mary Cover Jones** usedclassical conditioning to help overcome fears

**Relationship with Watson**

While attending a speech by leading behavioral psychologist, Watson, Cover Jones became interested in his most famous study, the Little Albert experiment. In this experiment Albert was classically conditioned to express a fearful response when a white rat was presented along with a loud noise that shocked the child. Cover Jones began to wonder if the techniques used by Watson could be used to make children less fearful of a stimulus in essence reversing his findings. These thoughts lead to her development of desensitization.[[3]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Cover_Jones#cite_note-:1-3)

**Little Peter experiment**

Cover Jones developed a technique known as [desensitization](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Desensitization_%28psychology%29), used to cure phobias. A patient may be desensitized through the repeated introduction of a series of stimuli that approximate the phobia. Desensitization was first developed by Jones in 1924 with her famous study of Little Peter.[[3]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Cover_Jones#cite_note-:1-3)

Her most often cited work is her study of the removal a fear of rabbits through conditioning, which she conducted on a three-year-old named Peter at the Institute of Educational Research, [Columbia University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Columbia_University) Teachers' College. Jones treated Peter's fear of a white rabbit by "direct [conditioning](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classical_conditioning)", in which a pleasant stimulus (food) was associated with the rabbit.[[6]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Cover_Jones#cite_note-:3-6) Cover Jones began her experiment with the goal of finding the most effective way to eliminate irrational fears in children. Peter was chosen for the study because in all other aspects of infant life he was considered to be normal except for his fear of rabbits. Peter was not only afraid of rabbits, but Cover Jones showed he would also cry when presented with other similar items such as, feathers, a fur coat, a fur rug and cotton. Cover Jones first conducted her experiments using a range of different treatments in order to eliminate the fear response in Peter. Cover Jones described her methods used in the Peter study as “patient, meticulous and painstaking procedures,” in order to understand what was taking place. This is a method that she learned from her mentor Watson.[[6]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Cover_Jones#cite_note-:3-6)

Cover Jones initiated the study having the rabbit 12 feet from Peter and brought the rabbit closer until it was nibbling on Peter’s fingers. As the rabbit was gradually brought closer to Peter with the presence of his favorite food (candy), his fear subsided and he eventually was able to touch the rabbit without crying.[[3]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Cover_Jones#cite_note-:1-3) After curing Peter of his phobia, Cover Jones wrote and published a paper about the experiment titled "A Laboratory Study of Fear: The Case of Peter (1924)". Though now considered to be a revolutionary experiment, at the time it was largely dismissed and was not even written up as Cover Jones’ dissertation. Cover Jones; however, was able to focus on furthering her interest in psychology by researching developmental psychology more in depth.

This study by Cover Jones is considered by some to be a defining landmark in behavioral therapy and was a breakthrough in how behaviorism could be studied and manipulated in the laboratory.[[6]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Cover_Jones#cite_note-:3-6) Due to the rediscovery of this research in the 1970s, Cover Jones was considered “the mother of behavioral therapy” by her friend Wolpe and other colleagues.

Joseph Wolpe - Desensitization

[Systematic desensitization](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Systematic_desensitization) is what Wolpe is most famous for. However, he was not the first to happen upon such an idea. [Mary Cover Jones](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Cover_Jones) had used similar techniques in treating phobias in younger children.[[9]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Wolpe#cite_note-9) But it was Wolpe who coined and perfected it. Systematic desensitization is when the client is exposed to the anxiety-producing stimulus at a low level, and once no anxiety is present a stronger version of the anxiety-producing stimulus is given. This continues until the individual client no longer feels any anxiety towards the stimulus. His work is effective and still used today based on relaxation techniques. Anxiety and relaxation cannot exist together.