Learned Helplessness Experiment: Worksheet

1. Briefly explain Seligman's Learned Helplessness Experiment. Identify the independent and dependent variables. Explain the results of the experiment. Define all terms in relation to the experiment.

2. Define learned helplessness. How does it relate to classical conditioning?

3. Fill in the blanks: Learned helplessness occurs when people or animals believe they have no _____ over their suffering. Therefore they stop trying to _____ it.

4. Concerning learned helplessness, does it matter whether escape is actually possible? Explain.

5. Name and define the two different kinds of explanatory styles.

6. Read the following statements and determine what kind of explanatory style each one falls under. Explain your reasoning.

A. I failed this math test because I'm not smart.

B. I failed this math test because the material was never properly explained.

C. I passed this math test because I did all the homework problems.

D. I passed this math test because the questions were easy.

7. How were Seligman and his colleagues finally able to get the dogs experiencing learned helplessness to cross the fence? How does this relate to depressed humans?