

## **Sigma's 30th International Nursing Research Congress**

### **Coping and Diary Writing Experience in Mothers of Troubled Teenagers and Adult Children**

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#### **Purpose:**

The mental health issues of children often impact the entire family, especially mothers. Limited research exists to examine how family members, specifically mothers, cope with emotional distress of dealing with their troubled children (Orford, Velleman, Natera, Templeton, & Copello, 2013). The first purpose of this study was to understand the coping strategies utilized among mothers of troubled teenagers and adult children. Additionally, the study also aimed to explore the benefits of a six week diary writing intervention. In particular, we examined the benefits of positive diary writing which included gratitude writing and best possible self (BPS) writing. Gratitude writing is a type of positive writing (PW) which focuses on positive aspects of a person's life, positive experiences, or personal strengths (Reiter & Wilz, 2015; Suhr, Risch, & Wilz, 2017). The best possible self (BPB) writing involves developing goals for and visualizing a best possible future self (Meshberg-Cohen, Svikis, & McMahan., 2014).

#### **Methods:**

This mixed method research used a quasi-experimental design method to test the changes in well-being after six weeks of diary keeping among mothers who had teenagers or adult children with emotional or behaviors problems, and the correlations among religiosity, religious coping, and emotional well-being. Qualitatively, we explored the mothers' commonly used coping strategies and the benefits of a diary writing intervention. Five open-ended items to explore diary writing experience were qualitatively analyzed using the Rapid Turnaround Analysis.

#### **Results:**

The sample consisted of a convenience sample of 37 mothers who had teenagers ( $n=7$ ) or adult aged children ( $n=30$ ) who had emotional or behavioral issues. Among these, 17 mothers reported substance abuse problems of their children. The most commonly used coping methods were emotion-focused and meaning-focused coping. Among a total of 155 reported coping methods, about 40% ( $n=62$ ) were emotion-focused, such as seeking emotional social support, emotional relaxation and expressing emotion; 34.84% ( $n=54$ ) were meaning-focused, such as benefit finding; and 25.16% ( $n=39$ ) were problem-focused, such as active coping and physical recreation.

The baseline data indicated that the participants had a moderately high level of organizational religious activity, non-organizational religious activity, and the intrinsic religiosity. The score of the subscale of PRC (positive religious coping) was much higher ( $M=21.54$ ) than that of NRC (negative religious coping) ( $M=8.74$ ), indicating mothers generally utilizing positive coping methods. Similarly, the score of their life satisfaction was moderately high ( $M=24.41$ ) along with a high level of gratitude ( $M=33.27$ ). The score of optimism was also pretty high ( $M=9.24$ ); but also high was the level of pessimism score ( $M=9.56$ ).

Participating mothers made journal entries at an average of 15 times over a 6-week period (ranges from 3 to 36,  $SD=7.19$ ). The findings indicated that there were changes in the level of optimism ( $p < .01$ ) and gratitude ( $p < .05$ ) after the six week journal writing. The three major themes of journaling experience were

positive thinking (focus and changing perspective), emotional well-being (gratitude, positive emotion, and relaxation), and self-therapy (therapeutic experience and stress management). Although some shared challenges such as a lack of time and busy schedules, these participating mothers positively shared the benefits of journaling, including the provision of therapeutic time.

### **Conclusion:**

Findings of the current study suggest that diary writing should be considered as an effective coping method. The current study suggests that diary writing intervention can be feasibly and successfully conducted at home as a self-therapeutic tool. The finding is important, particularly for health care professionals who want to facilitate improvements in their families but have limited time and resources.

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### **Title:**

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### **Keywords:**

coping, diary writing and mothers

### **References:**

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### **Abstract Summary:**

This study explored the benefits of a diary writing intervention and coping methods in mothers of troubled teenagers and adult children. A convenience sample of 37 mothers participated in a six-week diary writing intervention, and completed the baseline- and post-survey.

## **Content Outline:**

### **Introduction**

**Literature Review:** coping and diary writing intervention

### **Method**

Purpose and Research Questions

Sample

Procedure

Pre-Test

Home Diary Writing

Post-Test

Instruments

Analysis

### **Results**

Mothers' Characteristics and Concerns of Their Children

Frequencies of Coping Methods Used by Mothers

Baseline data

Religiosity

Religious Coping

Emotional Well-being

Post-Test Data: Benefits of Diary Writing Intervention

Quantitative Findings: Writing Intervention and Emotional Wellbeing

Qualitative Findings: Rapid Turnaround Analysis

Positive Thinking: 1) Focus; & 2) Changing Perspective

Emotional Wellbeing: 1) Gratitude; 2) Positive Emotions; & 3) Relaxation

Self-Therapy: 1) Therapeutic Experience; & 2) Stress Management

### **Discussion and Limitation**

## Conclusion

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