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Effectiveness of Best Possible Self and Gratitude Writing Interventions
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Purpose:

Diary writing intervention has been found to alleviate stress, lower depression, and improve emotional wellbeing (Alexander, McAllister, & Brien, 2016; Meshberg-Cohen, Svikis, & McMahon, 2014; Meston, Lorenz, & Stephenson, 2013; Pennebaker, 2013). However, it has not been examined in populations of parents affected by their children with emotional and behavioral issues. Writing interventions based on the paradigm of self-regulation focus on positive aspects of a person’s life, or positive experiences such as writing about one’s best possible self (BPS) (Suhr, Risch, & Wilz, 2017) or thinking or writing about things one feels grateful for over a period of time (O’Leary, & Dockray, 2015). The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of best possible self (BPS) and gratitude writing interventions on physiological and psychosocial outcomes in a sample of affected parents who have teenagers or adult children with emotional or behavioral problems.

Methods:

A quasi-experimental, pretest-posttest design was used. The questionnaire to measure the emotional well-being (Satisfaction With Life Scale [SWLS], the Gratitude Questionnaire [GQ-6], the revised Life Orientation Test [LOT-R], and Perceived Stress Scale [PSS]). and mental health variables (Patient Health Questionnaire of PHQ-9, GAD-7, and PHQ-15 scales) was administered in both tests. Saliva samples along with blood pressure were collected three times (baseline, after the first journal entry; and after the six week writing intervention). A convenience sample of 42 parents were asked to make journal entries at least three times per week for six weeks from February to June 2018. A total of 37 parents completed a gratitude journal (n=20) or a BPS journal (n=17). The participants made journal entries at an average of 15 times over a 6-week period (M= 15.43, ranges from 5 to 36, SD=6.89).

Results:

Among the 37 parents, 10 parents (27%) had teenagers and 27 (73%) had adult aged children. Twenty parents (54.1%) reported that their children had emotional issues and 17 parents (45.9%) reported substance abuse problems of their children. The findings of paired t-tests indicated that there were statistically significant decreases in the stress level (p=.000), somatic symptoms (p=.001), anxiety (p=.000) and depression (p=.01). In particular, among the BPS group, there were statistically significant decreases in stress (p=.000), depression (p=.04), anxiety (p=.045), and somatic symptoms (p=.011), as well as increases in life satisfaction (p=.004) and gratitude (p=.009). In contrast, among the gratitude group, there were statistically significant decreases in anxiety (p=.001) and somatic symptoms (p=.029). The findings of repeated measures ANOVAs indicated that writing intervention showed a statistically significant reduction in systolic blood pressure (BP) (p=0.16), but not diastolic BP (p=.065) and cortisol level (p=.094) at three different times.

Conclusion:

The BPS and gratitude diary writing can be used to promote the psychosocial wellbeing for the affected parents. Considering that limited resources are available for supporting family members in communities, nurses could recommend writing interventions for their clients as a self-help tool for their emotional well-being.
Title:

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Keywords:

affected parents, best possible writing and gratitude writing

References:


Abstract Summary:

Participants will learn that diary writing intervention decreases the stress level, somatic symptoms, anxiety, and depression. It can be used to promote psychosocial wellbeing for the affected parents without creating additional cost or burden.

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