Calm down
Strategies for emotion regulation in clinical practice

av

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Abstract


Problems with emotion regulation are common in people who seek help from health care professionals working with problems featuring psychological factors. Two such patient groups, chronic pain patients and patients with severe anxiety, are of interest in this dissertation. Effectively regulating and increasing functional emotion regulation in these patients is often challenging for clinicians, and effective strategies are needed. One treatment that greatly emphasizes the importance of functional emotion regulation is dialectical behavior therapy (DBT). DBT has a strong empirical basis in other patients with severe problems with emotion regulation, raising the question of whether the treatment and its more specific components (e.g., validation, which means communicating understanding and acceptance) could be effective in the groups of patients of interest here.

Accordingly, the overall aim of this dissertation was to expand our knowledge of how to use functional emotion-regulation strategies from DBT to regulate emotions in patients with chronic pain or treatment-resistant anxiety disorders. Study I examined whether brief training was enough to increase validation in partners of people with chronic pain, and whether this was associated with better-regulated emotion in the people with chronic pain. Study II explored patient perceptions of validation and invalidation by the physician in a clinical chronic pain context. Lastly, study III investigated whether a more extensive treatment intervention inspired by DBT was feasible and effective in patients suffering from treatment-resistant anxiety disorders.

The findings indicate that emotion-regulation strategies from DBT can be effective in regulating emotions in these patients. The dissertation also illustrates some of the difficulties in doing this, providing important information for future work, such as suggestions for modifications that might further increase positive outcomes.

Keywords: Emotion regulation; validation; invalidation; chronic pain; treatment-resistant anxiety disorders; dialectical behavior therapy, communication

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