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Effects of Positive Psychology Interventions in Depressive Patients—A Randomized Control Study

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ABSTRACT

Effects of Positive Psychology (PP) have been shown in several studies to alleviate depressive symptoms in patients suffering from major depression or dysthymia when administered within psychotherapy. The present study served to test for the effects of two interventions from PP (best possible self, three good things) when practised by depressive patients for three weeks without any other concomitant psychotherapy. Seventeen depressive patients were randomly assigned to either the PP group or the control group. Patients in the PP group wrote down the best possible self for one week and then three good things for another two weeks. Patients in the control group wrote down images of the future of mankind for one week and early memories for two weeks. Prior to the intervention and again after it had finished, depressive symptoms, satisfaction with life, positive and negative affect, optimism, and resilience were assessed. While in both groups of patients well-being and resilience increased and depressive symptoms declined, the decline of depressive symptoms and the increase of positive affect and resilience were more pronounced in the PP group. The results support the notion that even a short intervention using PP alone alleviates depressive symptoms and increases well-being. Although the effects were of marginal significance, this may be attributed to the relatively small sample size. Likewise, the use of an Intent-to-Treat analysis may have affected the PP group more than the control group, indicating an underestimation of the potency of PP in the present study.

KEYWORDS

Positive Psychology; Depression; Randomised Control Trial; Well-Being; Resilience

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