

Mini-internet training in positive reappraisal and concrete thinking for adolescents

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This study aims to compare the effects of a training in concrete thinking and a training in positive reappraisal with a control conditions (no specific training instructions) on indices of psychological wellbeing in youth aged 15 to 18. Participants...

| | |
|------------------------------|---------------------|
| Ethical review | Approved WMO |
| Status | Recruitment stopped |
| Health condition type | Other condition |
| Study type | Interventional |

Summary

ID

NL-OMON41128

Source

ToetsingOnline

Brief title

Mini-internet training

Condition

- Other condition

Synonym

stress and mood disorder symptoms

Health condition

stress en stemmings-, en spanningsklachten

Research involving

Human

Sponsors and support

Primary sponsor: Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam

Source(s) of monetary or material Support: Ministerie van OC&W

Intervention

Keyword: cognitive strategy, concrete thinking, positive reappraisal, training

Outcome measures

Primary outcome

Mood as measured by PANAS, directly after the training

Level of repetitive negative thinking (worry/rumination), directly after the training

Secondary outcome

Mood as measured by PANAS one week after the training

Level of repetitive negative thinking (worry/rumination) one week after the training

Level of positive reappraisal (manipulation check)

Level of concrete thinking (manipulation check)

Study description

Background summary

Rumination (or depressive worrying), can be defined as repeatedly and persistently thinking about the causes, consequences, and implications of stressful experiences. Characteristic to rumination is the abstract-analytical style and the experience of difficulties in stopping the process (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1991; Watkins, 2008). Rumination has a detrimental influence on the course of, and recovery from depressive disorder. Furthermore, rumination is strongly related to depressive symptoms in adults and youth from

the age of 10 (Lyubomirsky, Wisco, & Nolen-Hoeksema, 1999; Rood et al., 2009). The detrimental effects of rumination can predominantly be explained by the abstract-evaluative way of thinking (verbal, generalising, general, analytical, vague, ambiguous-interpretative, with regard to personality; Watkins, 2008). From research it can be concluded that the way of thinking about stressful events is a crucial factor is when it comes to ameliorating or worsening of mood. The hypothesized advantages that a concrete thinking style (detailed, experience-focused, situation-specific, visual; with regard to the situation; Watkins, 2008) has on mood has led to the development of concreteness training for prevention and treatment of depressive symptoms. This training has its roots in mindfulness, and can be seen as a cognitive intervention aimed at the reduction of ruminative and worrisome thinking leading to a reduction of depressive symptoms (Watkins, Baeyens, & Read, 2009). This training teaches to adopt a concrete thinking style when thinking about (for the participant) worrisome questions. As expected, this training has a beneficial effect on mood: a significant reduction in depressive symptoms and level of rumination was found (Watkins et al., 2009).

Besides a concrete thinking style, other thinking styles have been examined as counterparts of rumination with regard to their effects on mood. Helgeson, Reynolds and Tomich (2006) have examined the effects of another verbal and abstract-analytical thinking style (like rumination), positive reappraisal, on general well-being. Positive reappraisal is a thinking style, whereby a positive meaning is given to a negative stressful event. Studies (Helgeson et al., 2006; Rood, Roelofs, Bögels, & Arntz, 2012) have shown that positive reappraisal significantly is related to general wellbeing and that positive reappraisal can ameliorate mood in school-attending youth on the short-term. Positive reappraisal is just like rumination, an abstract and verbal thinking style. Rood et al. (2012) therefore suggest based on their research that positive reappraisal may be a fruitful alternative to a ruminative thinking style, specifically for individuals who have the tendency to think more in words than in images.

The effectiveness of a concreteness training, just as the effect of a training in positive reappraisal, has not yet been examined before in youth. Only the short-term effects of positive reappraisal have been examined in youth, in a brief experiment which showed that positive reappraisal causes an increase in positive affect and a decrease in negative affect when thinking about a stressful experience compared to rumination (Rood et al., 2009). Also, these two thinking styles as counterparts of rumination have not been compared to each other as yet.

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Study objective

This study aims to compare the effects of a training in concrete thinking and a training in positive reappraisal with a control conditions (no specific training instructions) on indices of psychological wellbeing in youth aged 15 to 18. Participants are asked to complete writing tasks via internet, by means

of which a concrete thinking style or positive reappraisal is trained using their personal experiences of that particular day, with the focus on negative events or experiences, during one week. The researchers expect both training programs will significantly positively affect mood and that mood will be better in the trainings groups compared to the control group. Furthermore, it is expected that the effect of the training programs is dependent on the natural tendency to ruminate, in that mood significantly ameliorates more strongly in the training groups compared to the control group as participants have a stronger tendency to ruminate.

The results of the current study can contribute to the prevention and treatment of mood disorder symptoms and stress in youth. The advantage of a brief, minimal intervention training to prevent stress and mood disorder symptoms as the current one, is that it is easily accessible for school-attending youth and that it is low-budget. The intervention is currently primarily designed as a preventive intervention.

Study design

Evaluation mini-training, online intervention study (carried out at home), parallel-group randomised controlled trial; 3 conditions: positive reappraisal training, concreteness training, control group

Design of study over the period of 14 days:

Day 1 Pre-measurement* and Writing task (mini-internet training)**

Day 2 to 6 Writing task

Day 7 Writing task and Post-measurement***

Day 14 Follow-up measurement****

*Pre-measurement: demographic data, mood disorder symptoms (Beck Depression Inventory; BDI-II-NL), worry/rumination (Perseverative Thinking Questionnaire; PTQ-NL), positive and negative mood states (Positive Affect Negative Affect Schedule; PANAS)

***Post-measurement: PANAS, PTQ, Manipulation check and evaluation

****Follow-up measurement: PANAS, PTQ

**Writing task

1. Pre-measurement affect state VAS (time 1)
2. General instruction writing task (for all conditions) "Think about a stressful experience..."
3. Post-measurement VAS (time 2)
4. Specific instructions per condition
 - a. Positive reappraisal condition
 - b. Concreteness training condition
 - c. Control condition
5. Post-measurement VAS (time 3)

Intervention

Part 1

Now we want you to think about a stressful event or situation that is bothering you at this moment, today, or that you experienced today and that is bothering you now. You may think for example about a fight with your parents or with a friend, problems at school, being bullied, being in love with someone, etc. It can also be something small, as long as it occupies you. (If you really cannot think of something, think about something stressful that happened some time longer ago and which occupies you still from time to time.)

Try to play the event in your head as a movie, and to experience all thoughts and feelings accompanying the event again now, until you see the event again lively before you and as if you are in the middle of it again. Freeze the screen at the most stressful moment.

Now describe very briefly (in max. 10 words) which stressful event or situation you are thinking of (e.g., *fight with teacher*. There may be more than one event.

How bad is this event to you? 1= not bad....2=a bit bad*3=pretty bad*4=very bad*
5= the worst thing I've ever experienced

Part 2 Specific instructions per condition

Positive reappraisal condition

You just thought about the stressful experience. Now we want you to think about that experience again, but now in a specific way.

Now try to think about the positive sides of the stressful event. Use the following support questions to think about the stressful event. You may decide for yourself how much time you spend on one question, as long as you try to answer the question for yourself. Try to keep to the instructions!

1. Think about what you learned from this experience
2. Think about the positive things that this stressful event has brought to you
3. Think about the things you do still have
4. Think about how this event has finally made you stronger

Some people think in words, other see images before them. You may decide yourself whether you think in words or images.

Now we want you to write down what goes through your mind, when you try to answer the questions. What kind of thoughts and/or images come up? Try to describe what goes through your mind as accurately as possible and to be as completely as possible in your description. (We don*t want you to go thinking again at this moment, just write down what you thought about during the task.)

Concreteness training condition

You just thought about the stressful experience. Now we want you to think about that experience again, but now in a specific way. Try to think as lively and concretely as possible to think about the stressful experience. Use the following support questions to think about the stressful event. You may decide for yourself how much time you spend on one question, as long as you try to answer the question for yourself. Try to keep to the instructions!

1. Think about how it happened (What happened first? What followed? And consequently?)
2. Try to play the stressful event in your thoughts (see it before you) as a movie
3. Try to remember as much details and facts of the event as possible (think about where you was, with whom, what you were wearing, what time it was, which day, how did the environment look like? etc.)
4. What did you exactly feel in your body? What did it smell like? What colours did you see? What kind of sounds did you hear around you? What went through your mind regarding thoughts and feelings?

Some people think in words, other see images before them. You may decide yourself whether you think in words or images.

Now we want you to write down what goes through your mind, when you try to answer the questions. What kind of thoughts and/or images come up? Try to describe what goes through your mind as accurately as possible and to be as completely as possible in your description. (We don*t want you to go thinking again at this moment, just write down what you thought about during the task.)

Control condition

You just thought about the stressful experience. Now we want you to think about that experience again. Describe the stressful situation in your own words. Try not to wander off and think about anything else, even if that can be difficult.

Some people think in words, other see images before them. You may decide yourself whether you think in words or images.

Now we want you to write down what goes through your mind, when you try to answer the questions. What kind of thoughts and/or images come up? Try to describe what goes through your mind as accurately as possible and to be as completely as possible in your description. (We don*t want you to go thinking again at this moment, just write down what you thought about during the task.)

Study burden and risks

The participants are trained to adopt a certain thinking strategy when thinking of personal, negative or stressful experiences. This can be confronting for some participants and cause a negative mood.

Youth diagnosed with a mood disorder are excluded from the study. Most youth think about stressful experiences every day, and especially when they have a tendency to worry (indicating vulnerability to stress) the trained thinking strategies could have beneficial effects.

No specific instructions are given in the control condition, just the instruction to take a moment to think about the experience and to write down their thoughts (like in a diary).

In general, the participants keep control of how much time they spend on the task, there is no pressure regarding time. Adverse effects of thinking about something stressful that happened that day, are most likely of a temporary nature and under the participant's control.

Burden filling out questionnaires:

Pre-measurement: 15 minutes

Post-measurement: 10 minutes

Follow-up measurement: 10 minutes

Contacts

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Trial sites

Listed location countries

Netherlands

Eligibility criteria

Age

Adolescents (12-15 years)

Adolescents (16-17 years)

Adults (18-64 years)

Elderly (65 years and older)

Inclusion criteria

school-attending youth aged 15 to 18

Exclusion criteria

life-time diagnosis of depression or currently in treatment for mood symptoms. Participants declare by signing the consent form never having received a diagnosis of depression nor being in treatment for mood disorder symptoms.

Study design

Design

| | |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| Study type: | Interventional |
| Intervention model: | Parallel |
| Allocation: | Randomized controlled trial |
| Masking: | Single blinded (masking used) |

Primary purpose: Prevention

Recruitment

| | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| NL | |
| Recruitment status: | Recruitment stopped |
| Start date (anticipated): | 10-11-2014 |
| Enrollment: | 90 |
| Type: | Actual |

Ethics review

Approved WMO

Date: 30-09-2014

Application type: First submission

Review commission: METC Erasmus MC, Universitair Medisch Centrum Rotterdam (Rotterdam)

Study registrations

Followed up by the following (possibly more current) registration

No registrations found.

Other (possibly less up-to-date) registrations in this register

No registrations found.

In other registers

| Register | ID |
|----------|----------------|
| CCMO | NL49560.078.14 |

Study results

Date completed: 03-08-2015

Actual enrolment: 132