

The effect of universal program based on ACT for adolescents under unusual stress

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Introduction

Universal intervention programs for adolescents

Previous studies have provided evidence that experiential avoidance, which is a key concept in Acceptance & Commitment Therapy (ACT), is associated with mental health in adolescents, such as depression (Biglan et al., 2015; Paulus et al., 2016), well-being (Venta et al., 2012; Ciarrochi et al., 2011). But few studies have examined to evaluate the efficacy of ACT, especially universal intervention programs for adolescents.

Purpose

The present study explored the effect of the ACT based universal programs that aimed to enhance self-esteem and reduce depressive and anxious symptom for adolescents under unusual stress.

Method

Participants

Participants were 347 third grade junior high school (ninth grade) students (184 girls and 163 boys). Participants were assigned to an ACT based intervention condition (81 students: 44 girls and 37 boys) or a control condition (266 students: 140 girls and 126 boys) in accordance with their school classes.

Measures

Avoidance and Fusion Questionnaire for Youth (AFQ-Y8; Greco, Lambert, & Bear, 2008)

To assess experiential avoidance and behavioral ineffectiveness in the presence of stressor, we used Japanese version of AFQ-Y8 (AFQ-Y8-J; Ishizu, Shimoda, & Ohtsuki, 2014), a 8-item self-report scale.

Mental Health Checklist for Junior High School Students (Okayasu & Takayama, 1999)

The depression/anxiety subscale of this checklist was used to measure their psychological stress response.

Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965)

To measure self esteem we used Japanese version of RSES, a 10-item self-report scale (RSES-J; Mimura & Griffiths, 2007; Uchida & Ueno, 2014).

Procedure

All participants completed these scales at three times (pre / post / follow up) just before their high school examinations. The ACT based intervention which the authors developed was a class-wide universal program consisted 4 sessions (each 50 min) and focused a process of value, acceptance, mindfulness, and commitment (Table1).

Data analysis

We used 287 students' data (intervention condition $N=68$; control condition $N=219$) who completed all scales. To investigate the efficacy of the program, 3 ways ANOVAs (between2 [group; intervention / control], [experiential avoidance; high / low], within1 [time; pre / post / follow up]) were conducted.

Table1 The contents of program

	Agenda	Contents
Session 1	Values	Psychological education: What is value Metaphor: compass, Frozen, occupation Exercise: Find your values.
Session 2	Acceptance	Psychological education: What is "mind" Metaphor: mind machine Exercise: white bear, walking with white bear
Session 3	Mindfulness	Psychological education: What is mindfulness, Why acceptance Exercise: mindful breathing
Session 4	Commitment	Psychological education: What is commitment, Review Exercise: 10 min hack

Results

Table2 The means and standard errors of participants by condition and EA

	EA	Intervention condition			Control condition		
		Pre	Post	Follow up	Pre	Post	Follow up
AFQ-Y8-J	High	14.38 (0.57)	13.33 (0.87)	13.31 (0.93)	15.10 (0.40)	14.55 (0.59)	15.35 (0.55)
	Low	6.12 (0.44)	8.62 (0.80)	8.42 (0.85)	5.18 (0.25)	7.04 (0.42)	8.39 (0.54)
Dep./Anx.	High	15.41 (0.93)	15.55 (0.96)	14.41 (1.00)	14.10 (0.56)	13.59 (0.55)	13.21 (0.50)
	Low	10.50 (1.05)	10.27 (1.02)	9.50 (1.18)	9.24 (0.41)	9.20 (0.45)	9.69 (0.46)
RSES-J	High	11.62 (0.68)	13.00 (0.77)	13.07 (0.69)	11.33 (0.49)	11.28 (0.52)	11.69 (0.48)
	Low	14.39 (0.77)	15.42 (0.73)	16.58 (0.81)	14.35 (0.37)	14.55 (0.37)	14.76 (0.37)

Note: AFQ-Y8-J=Japanese version of Avoidance and Fusion Questionnaire for Youth;
Dep./Anx.= The depression/anxiety subscale of Mental Health Checklist for Junior High School Students;
RSES-J=Japanese version of Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale;
EA=The tendency of experiential avoidance at pre-intervention

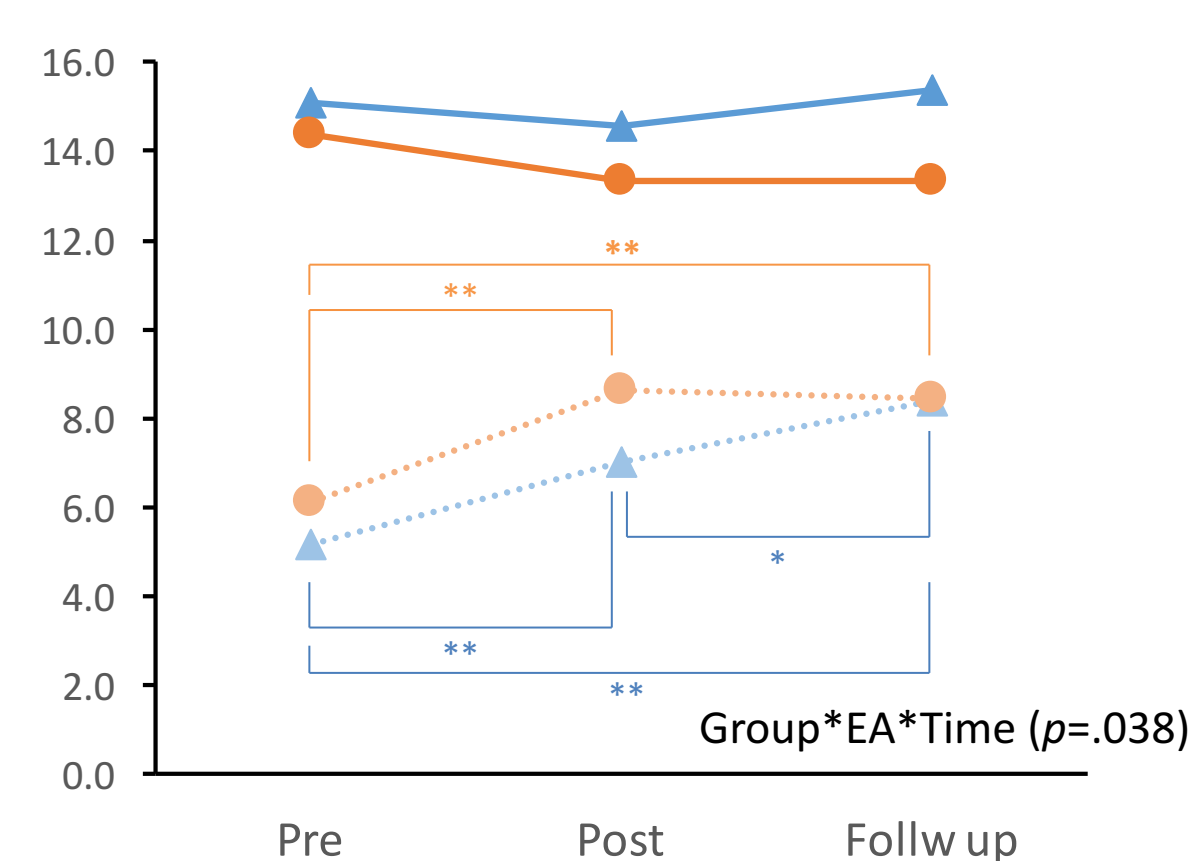


Fig.1 The results of experiential avoidance (AFQ-Y8-J)

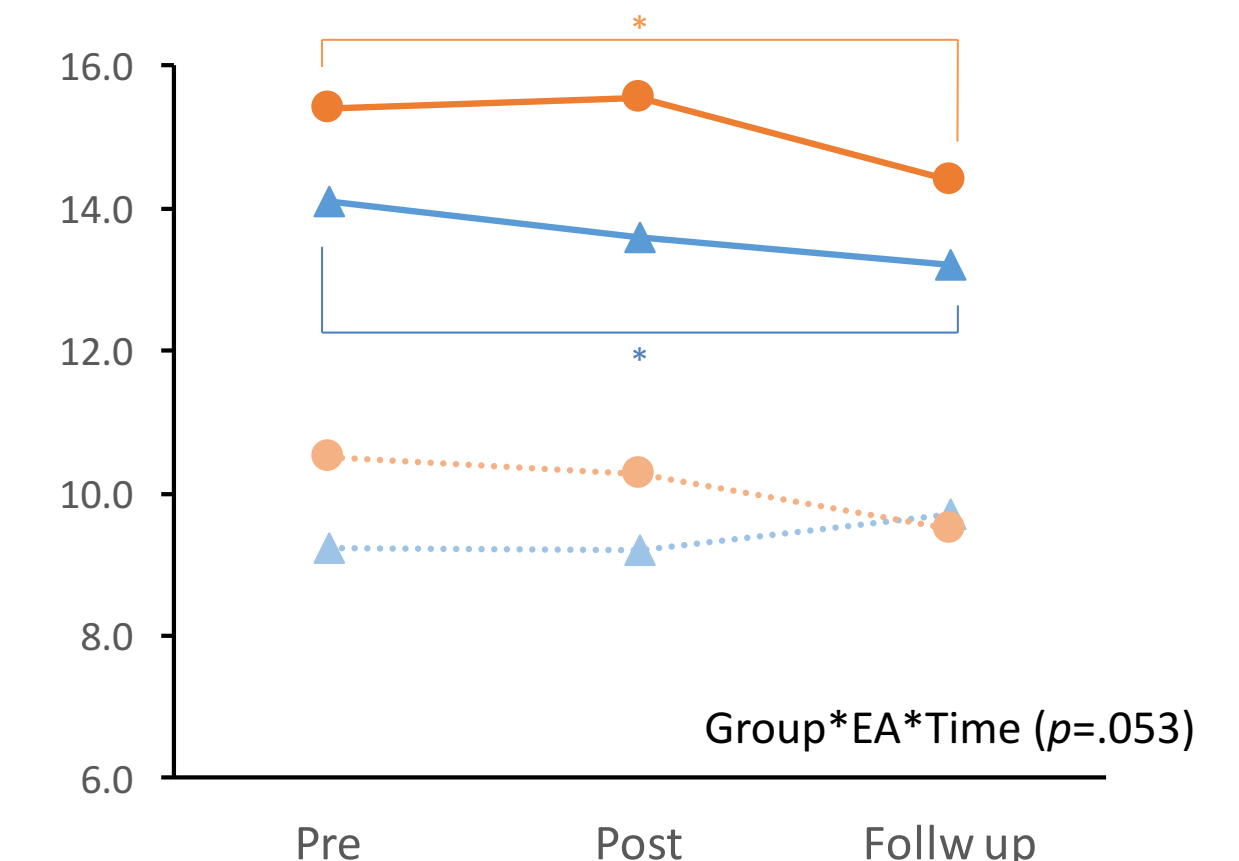


Fig.2 The results of Depression / Anxiety

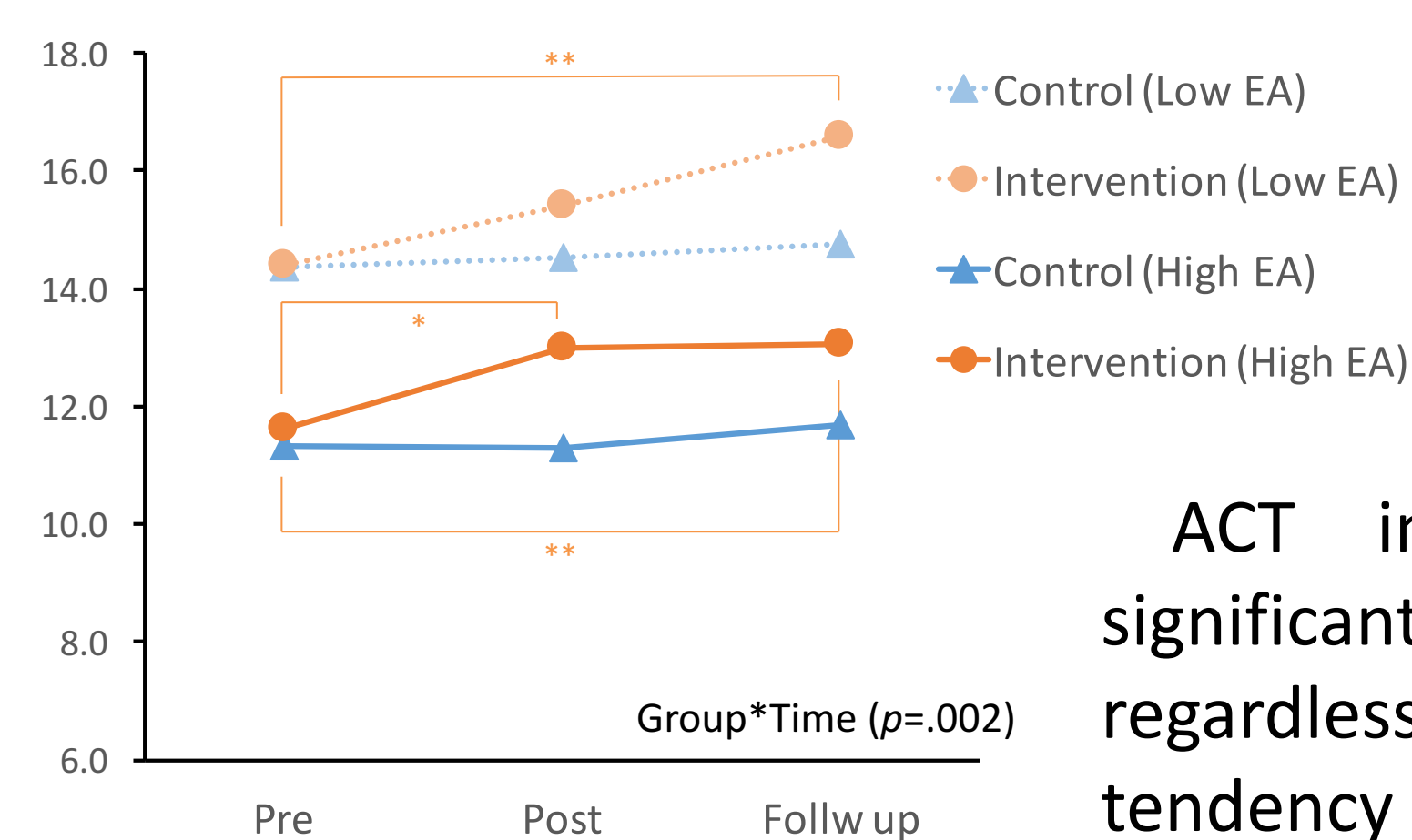


Fig.3 The results of self esteem (RSES-J)

ACT intervention led to a significant increase in self-esteem regardless of the participant's tendency of experiential avoidance at pre-intervention.

Conclusions

Although the efficacy of ACT preventing to increase psychological stress response under unusual stress event, the present study shows the validity of ACT for the universal program aimed to enhance self-esteem in young generation.