

The Effectiveness of an ACT Self-help Intervention for Stress and Burnout: An Exclusively Online Randomized Controlled Trial

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OBJECTIVE

- Chronic stress is associated with health problems, impaired job performance and absenteeism (Houtman et al., 1999).
- There is growing evidence to support the effectiveness of ACT in the workplace in increasing psychological flexibility (Bond & Bunce, 2000), reducing stress (Flaxman & Bond, 2010) and alleviating symptoms of burnout (Lloyd, Bond & Flaxman, 2013).
- However, interventions programs may be costly, have limited access and difficult to implement.
- A self-help intervention without therapist contact using bibliotherapy may help to overcome some of these limitations.

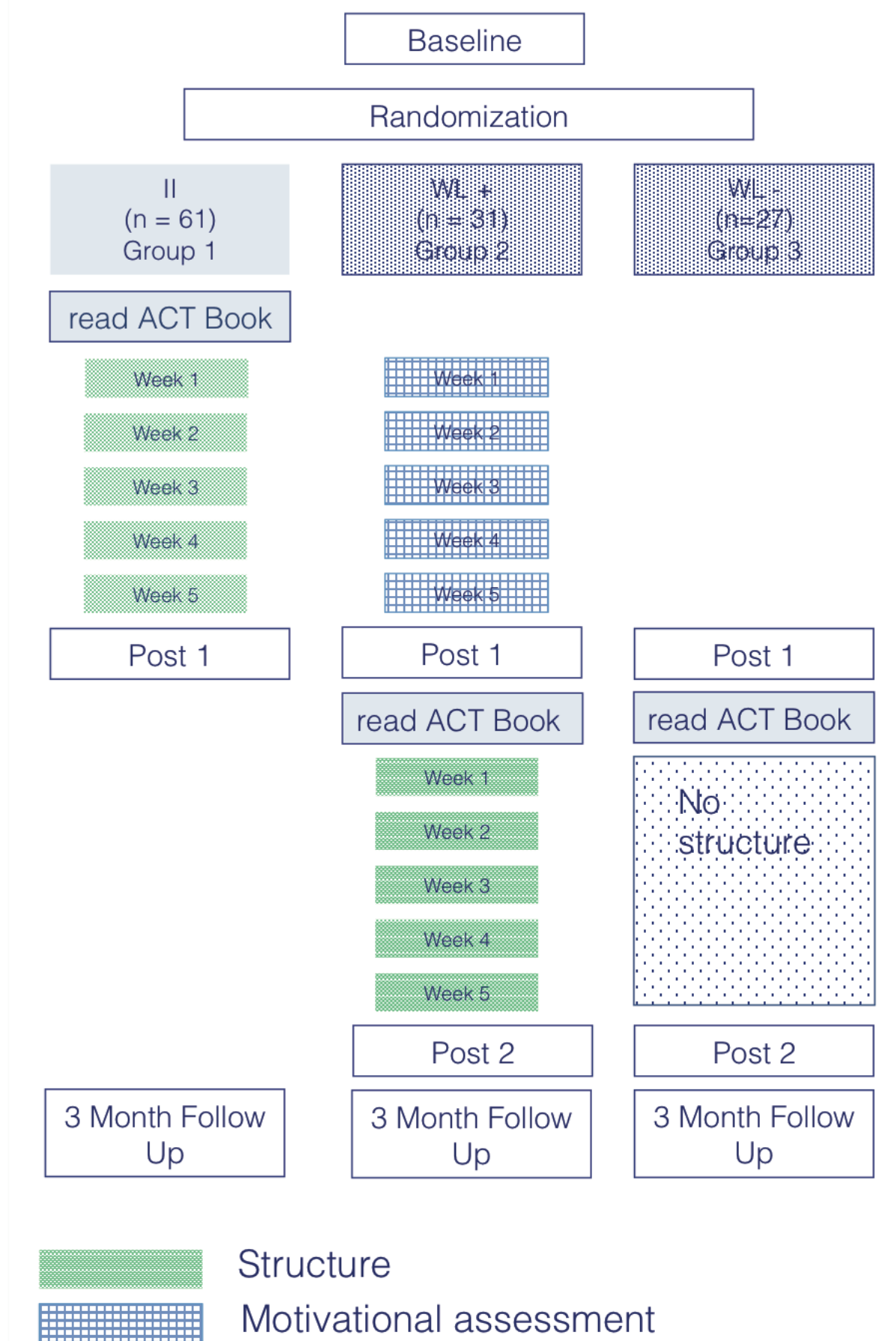
AIM

- Is a self-help book using ACT (Waadt & Acker, 2012) to target stress and burnout without therapist contact effective?
- Do imposed structure during and a motivational assessment before the intervention have an effect on outcomes?

METHOD

- Sample:
 - N = 119
 - recruited through advertisement in newsletter of a health insurance company
 - Age: $M = 43.8$, $SD = 10.1$, (range: 26-65)
 - Inclusion criteria: score ≥ 17 on Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)
 - Exclusion criteria: current psychotherapy, active current suicidal intent
 - Dropout rate: 18.0%
- Online assessments
- Primary outcomes:
 - PSS
 - Maslach Burnout Inventory - General Survey (MBI-GS)
- Secondary outcomes:
 - Beck Depression Inventory (BDI-II)
 - ACT processes
- Intervention Content
 - Psychoeducation Burnout and Stress
 - Metaphors and Exercises for the 6 ACT processes

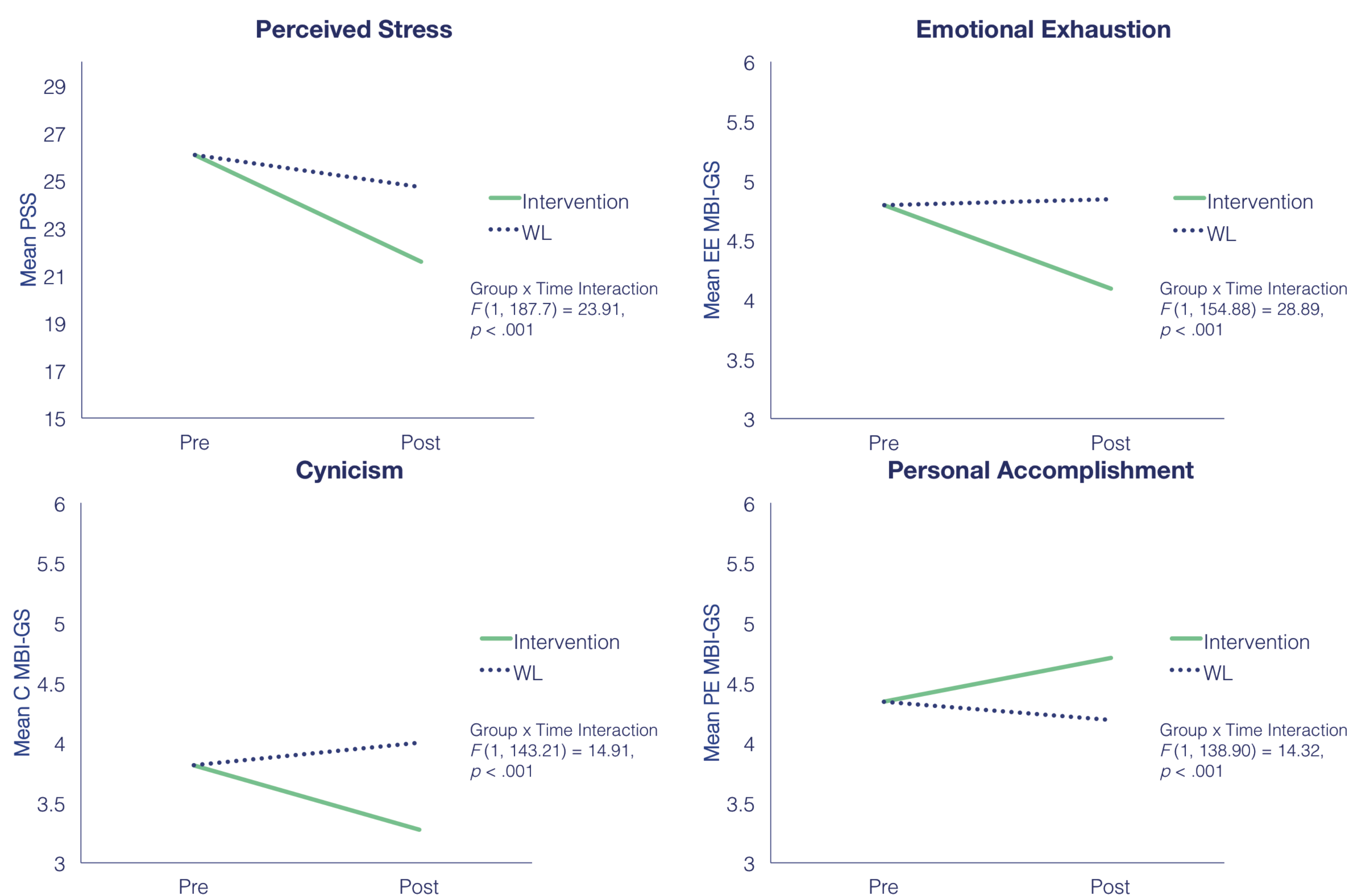
Study Design



RESULTS

Intervention Effectiveness

- The II improved significantly more than the combined WL group on perceived stress, burnout, depressive symptomatology and on some but not all ACT processes.



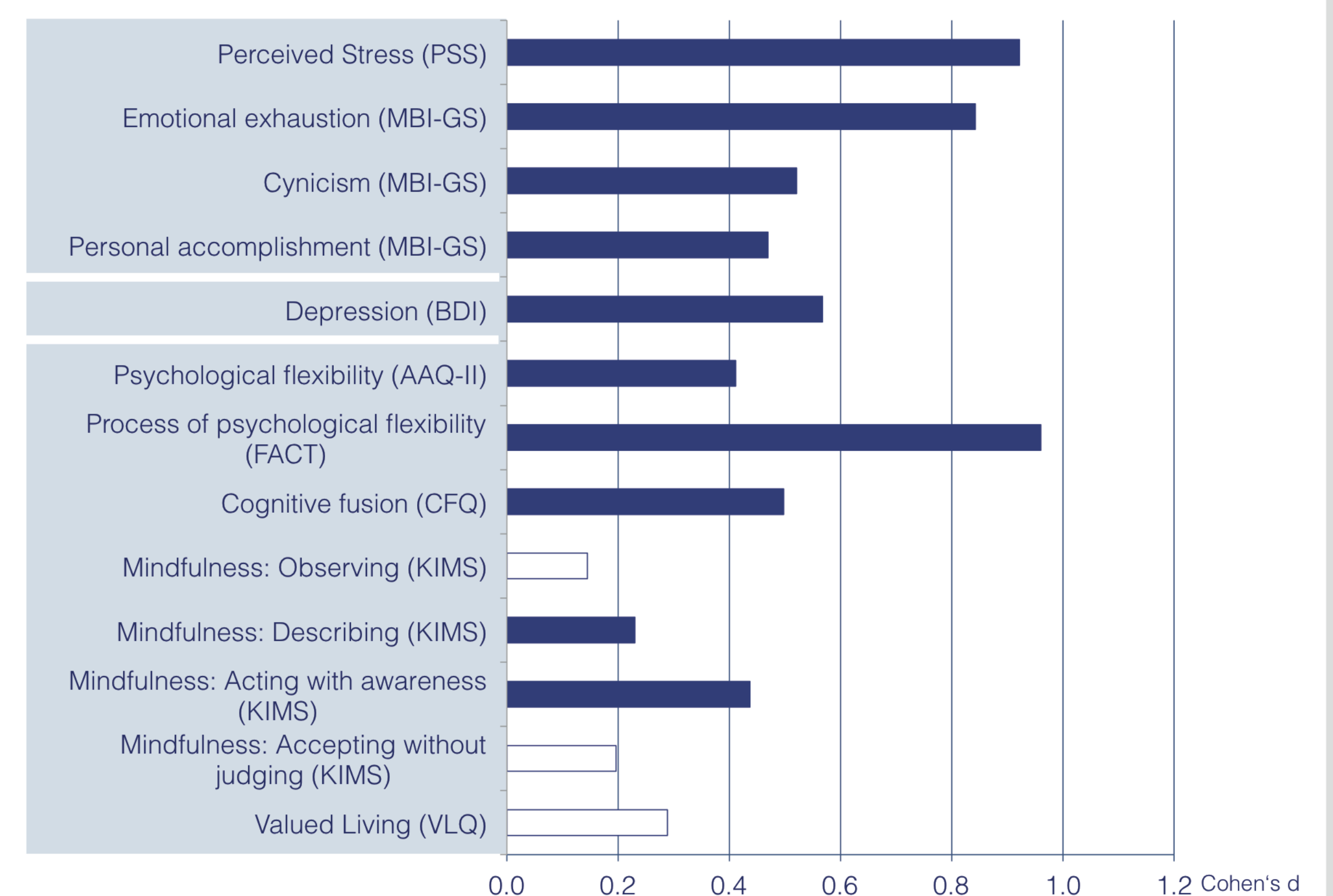
Within-Group Change and Maintenance of Gains following the Intervention

- All variables were statistically improved at FU compared to baseline.
- Gains on all variables were at least maintained from post to FU.
- All primary and secondary variables continued to improve significantly from post to FU, except for the process of psychological flexibility, the observing and acting with awareness subscales of mindfulness and valued living.

CONCLUSIONS

- The II is superior to the combined WL on all primary variables and most secondary variables.
- Largest effect sizes were noted on perceived stress, emotional exhaustion and the process of psychological flexibility.
- Effects were maintained up to 3 months or even continued to improve.
- Imposed structure during and motivational assessment prior to the intervention did not have an effect on outcomes.
- Analyses suggest the reduction of suffering by using a self-help book with no additional therapist contact.
- Thus, an ACT self-help book may provide a cost-effective and easily accessible first step intervention for stress and burnout.

Controlled Effect Sizes



Controlled effect sizes of outcome measures at post-treatment (vs. WL groups). Blue bars indicate a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) from the combined WL group.

Imposed structure during and motivational assessment prior to the Intervention

- Structure: No differences in change across the intervention between II and WL- group, except for the process of psychological flexibility ($F(1, 100.08) = 14.32, p = .001$).
- Motivational assessment: No differences in change across the intervention between II and WL+ group, except for the process of psychological flexibility ($F(1, 100.81) = 14.32, p = .001$) and valued living ($F(1, 97.21) = 14.32, p = .001$).

LITERATURE

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