

Results from a group-based stress management ACT-intervention programme – a pilot study.

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Background

Relatively little is known about using group-based stress management interventions targeting persons with long term work-related stress. A previously conducted CBT study showed a significant effect on perceived stress.

Aims

To test a group-based ACT intervention manual targeting workers with long term work-related stress. Assessment of outcomes related to psychological flexibility and perceived stress.

Methods

8-9 participants joined each of the nine treatment groups. The intervention spanned eight 2½ hour sessions spread over three months and a booster-session three months later. The Acceptance and Action Questionnaire (AAQ-II) was administered at all sessions, while the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10) was administered at sessions 1 and 8.

Demographics

- 94% women
- 74% referred from GP
- 59% on sick leave at referral
- 94% employees/ 6%managers
- 91% in public sector, half in healthcare
- 52% prior psychological treatment

Intervention

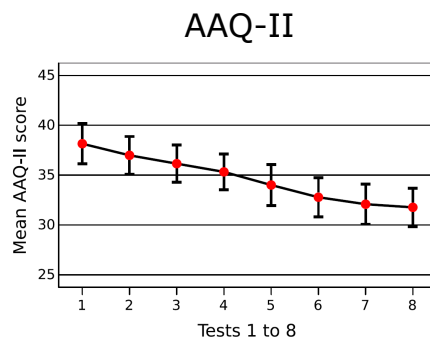
Group format

- 8 x 2.5-hour sessions + booster session
- 8-9 participants/group
- Led by 2 ACT-trained psychologists

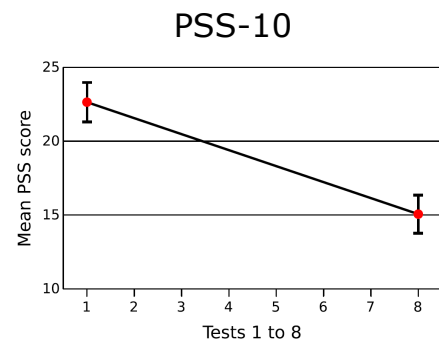
Key elements

- Mindfulness exercises
- Identifying avoidance behavior
- Defusion techniques
- Developing willingness
- Defining values
- Defining committed action in daily life

Results: Mean AAQ-II and PSS-10 scores, sessions 1-8



Pre-post diff. = 6.2 point, $p < 0.001$
Cohen's $d = 0.73$ [0.40-1.06]



Pre-post diff. = 7.7 point, $p < 0.001$
Cohen's $d = 1.40$ [1.02-1.78]

Discussion

We find medium to large pre-post effect sizes on AAQ-II and PSS-10. Compared to the earlier CBT-study we find comparable pre-post differences on PSS-10. Limitations are the lack of a randomized control group and the lack of long-term follow-up.