

A Randomized Controlled Comparison of Emotional Freedom Technique and Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy to Reduce Adolescent Anxiety: A Pilot Study.

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Abstract

OBJECTIVE:

The objective of this pilot study was to compare the efficacy of Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) with that of Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) in reducing adolescent anxiety.

DESIGN:

Randomized controlled study.

SETTINGS:

This study took place in 10 schools (8 public/2 private; 4 high schools/6 middle schools) in 2 northeastern states in the United States.

PARTICIPANTS:

Sixty-three high-ability students in grades 6-12, ages 10-18 years, who scored in the moderate to high ranges for anxiety on the Revised Children's Manifest Anxiety Scale-2 (RCMAS-2) were randomly assigned to CBT (n = 21), EFT (n = 21), or waitlist control (n = 21) intervention groups.

INTERVENTIONS:

CBT is the gold standard of anxiety treatment for adolescent anxiety. EFT is an evidence-based treatment for anxiety that incorporates acupoint stimulation. Students assigned to the CBT or EFT treatment groups received three individual sessions of the identified protocols from trained graduate counseling, psychology, or social work students enrolled at a large northeastern research university.

OUTCOME MEASURES:

The RCMAS-2 was used to assess preintervention and postintervention anxiety levels in participants.

RESULTS:

EFT participants (n = 20; M = 52.16, SD = 9.23) showed significant reduction in anxiety levels compared with the waitlist control group (n = 21; M = 57.93, SD = 6.02) (p = 0.005, d = 0.74, 95% CI [-9.76, -1.77]) with a moderate to large effect size. CBT participants (n = 21; M = 54.82, SD = 5.81) showed reduction in anxiety but did not differ significantly from the EFT (p = 0.18, d = 0.34; 95% CI [-6.61, 1.30]) or control (p = 0.12, d = 0.53, 95% CI [-7.06, .84]).

CONCLUSIONS:

EFT is an efficacious intervention to significantly reduce anxiety for high-ability adolescents.

KEYWORDS:

Emotional Freedom Techniques; adolescent anxiety; gifted; randomized controlled trial; schools