Behavioral Activation of Religious Behaviors: Treating Depressed College Students with a Randomized Controlled Trial

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Abstract
Although spiritual or religious behaviors are sometimes targeted within behavioral activation protocols (Hopko & Lejuez, 2007; Hopko, Lejuez, Ruggiero, & Eifert, 2003), the efficacy of a protocol that exclusively develops a religiously-based behavioral repertoire has not been investigated. This randomized controlled study investigated the efficacy of a brief protocol for religious action in behavioral activation (PRA-BA) relative to a no-treatment “support” condition among mild to moderately depressed undergraduate students (n = 50). PRA-BA consisted of an individualized one-session intervention and 2-week activation interval. Clinical outcomes assessed depression, environmental reward, anxiety, and quality of life. Repeated measures ANOVAs indicated that the PRA-BA group had significantly greater decreases in depression and anxiety and increases in environmental reward at post-treatment. There was also a statistical trend indicating that PRA-BA may improve quality of life. At one-month follow-up, treatment gains were maintained for the PRA-BA participants. This study provides encouraging support for the efficacy of a strictly religiously-based behavioral intervention toward attenuating symptoms of depression in college students.

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The first article was, Behavioral Activation of Religious Behaviors (BARB): Randomized Trial With Depressed College Students by Maria E. A. Armento, James K. McNulty, and Derek R. Hopko. It was retrieved from Psychology of Religion and Spirituality 2012 Volume 4 Number 3, 206-222. This study had the subject areas of behavioral activation, religion, depression, spirituality, college students, and anxiety. The hypothesis of this study was to find whether increased religious behavior would decrease depression in students. The predictor variable in this study was increased religious behavior and the control group received no treatment. Posttests were conducted 3 weeks later on those that completed all requirements. The EFT group. An RCT of teenagers treated with EFT for traumatic memories found that the experimental group experienced significant reduction of emotional triggering and a return to normal values on the assessments, while the untreated control group did not improve over time [7]. A hospital in Britain’s National Health Service (NHS) conducted an RCT comparing Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) with EFT in [37] conducted a randomized controlled trial of 83 patients that measured cortisol levels before and after treatment with either EFT, psychotherapy, or relaxation. Behavioral activation of religious behaviors (BARB): Randomized trial with depressed college students. Psychology of Religion and Spirituality 4, 206–222. Bolton, P, Bass, JK, Zangana, GAS, Kamal, T, Murray, SM, Kaysen, D, Lejuez, CW, Lindgren, K, Pagoto, S, Murray, LK, Van Wyk, SS, Ahmed, AMA, Mohammad Amin, NM, Rosenblum, M (2014). A randomized controlled trial of mental health interventions for survivors of systematic violence in Kurdistan, Northern Iraq. BMC Psychiatry 14, 360. Collado, A, Calderón, M, MacPherson, L, Lejuez, C (2016). The efficacy of behavioral activation treatment among d...