

Comparing two clients in Emotion-Focused Therapy for Generalized Anxiety Disorder across four dimensions of: Negative Emotions, Positive Emotions, Negative Treatment-of-self, and Positive Treatment-of-self

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Abstract

Using the individual case comparison methodology and implementing Plutchik's wheel of emotion this study tracks the process of change between two clients with divergent outcomes, across the 4 dimensions of: negative treatment-of-self, positive treatment-of-self, negative emotions, and positive emotions. The results highlight certain factors that are specific to good and poor outcome clients.

Introduction

Generalized anxiety disorder is increasingly being recognized as a considerable mental health concern. However, it remains a poorly understood and insufficiently treated chronic disorder. Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) affects 3.1% of adults each year, including twice as many women as men (National Institute of Mental Health, 2010). Unlike other anxiety disorders like panic disorder (e.g. McNally, 1994), social phobia (e.g. Heimberg & Becker, 2002), or obsessive compulsive disorder (e.g. Swinson, Antony, Rachman, & Richter, 1998), in which considerable advances are evident, GAD remains an understudied (Dugas, 2000), and treatment-resistant (Borkovec & Ruscio, 2001) disorder. Recent conceptualizations have highlighted the role of emotional awareness, acceptance, and regulations as core features of the generalized anxiety disorder (Mennin, 2004). Other researchers have also suggested that understanding emotional regulation can greatly help both researchers and clinicians in treating individuals with anxiety disorders (Mennin, Heimberg, Turk, & Fresco, 2002; Greenberg & Pascual-Leone, 2006). **The objectives and outcome for the study were to compare and contrast good and poor outcome clients' process and progress, to identify factors that contribute to change in short-term therapy, and to examine the impact of EFT for GAD.**

Method

The data is drawn from a pilot study in which participants received Emotion Focused Therapy (EFT) in the treatment of GAD (Elliott, Watson, Goldman, & Greenberg, 2003). The sample is comprised of 2 female clients with an average age of 30. The clients met DSM-IV criteria for GAD. Clients received one hour of individual psychotherapy once a week for 16 weeks. In the current study the poor outcome client received 16 sessions of individual psychotherapy, whereas the good outcome client received individual psychotherapy for 24 week, at the client's request. The selected clients had received individual psychotherapy from two different therapists with no significant differences between therapists in terms of years of therapy experience or age.

Measures: Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAII), Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD-7), State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI), and Working Alliance Inventory (WAI-S) were administered at pre and post-therapy. **Process Measures:** Plutchik's Wheel of Emotion (Plutchik, 1980), Negative Treatment-of-Self and Positive Treatment-of-Self (Watson & McMullen, 2010; MCPP). **Procedure:** The original video and audio tapes of the recorded sessions for identified clients were used to transcribe each session. In order to track a client's negative and positive emotion statements across and within therapy sessions, Plutchik's wheel of emotions was used. The identified emotion statements were then assigned to one of Plutchik's identified primary emotions. In the next phase, each client's emotion statements were categorized as either positive or negative emotion. It was also determined that each client's statements, if applicable, would be rated on negative or positive self-treatment. Each emotion rating based on the Plutchik's model was categorized as a score that reflects either a positive or negative emotional state. Also, each client's ratings on negative or positive self-treatment were recorded for each session and over the course of therapy. we believed shame is a primary emotion and plays a critical role in any form of anxiety related disorder, we decided to rate it as a separate category.

Results

Good Outcome Client (Negative TOS & NES)

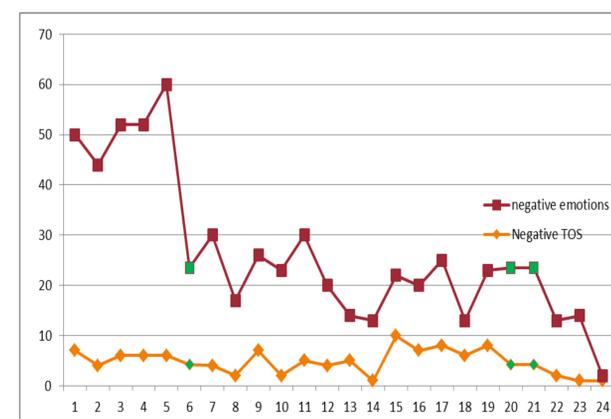


Figure 1: Good Outcome changes in # of NE's statements and Negative TOS across the 24 sessions of therapy.

Poor Outcome Client (Negative TOS & NES)

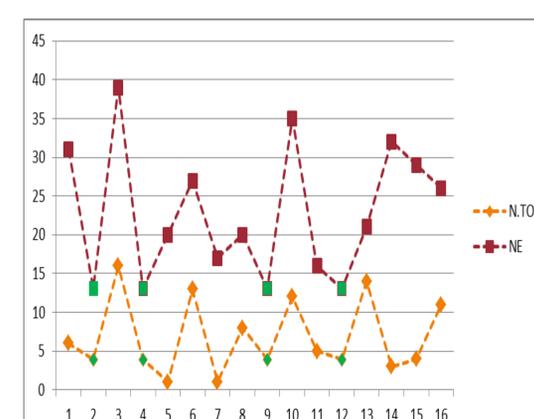


Figure 2: Poor Outcome changes in # of NE's statements and Negative TOS across the 16 sessions of therapy.

Results

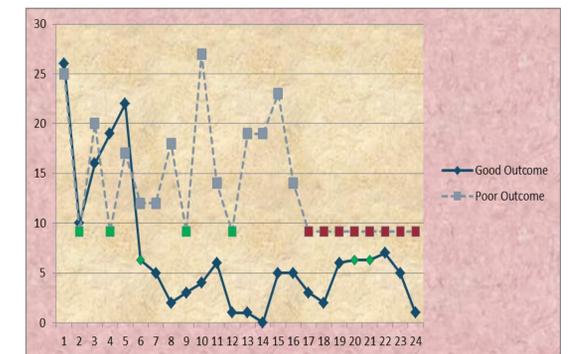


Figure 3: good and poor outcome clients' changes on fear emotion statements across therapy.

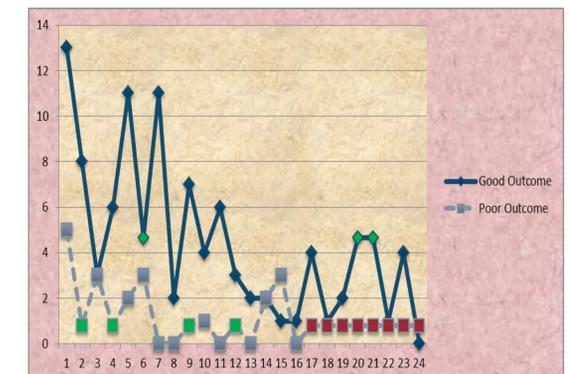


Figure 4: good and poor outcome clients' changes on shame emotion statements across therapy.

Conclusions

The findings suggests that certain factors such as client readiness to access and acknowledge painful affect, engage in emotion processing tasks, length of therapy, social support, being psychologically minded, and most importantly being able to access shame, and work with it in session, all played an important role in clients outcomes. Emotions, in general, appeared more volatile and were subject to change than individual's action tendencies. These findings have important implications for tailoring treatment to clients with GAD.



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