

A Dialectical Behavioral Therapy Adaptation in Reducing Depression, Anxiety, and Self-Harm in Older Adults

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Abstract : It has long been assumed that personality disorders (PD) originate in adolescence or early adulthood and that the maladaptive behaviors significantly attenuate over time. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-5 supports early onset of PD and views the pattern of behaviors as enduring and stable. The premise of this study is that PD may not always begin early in life, that behaviors may change over the lifespan, and that current treatment modalities may be beneficial in seniors. Self-injurious behaviors (SIB) exhibited earlier in life may, in older adults, be manifested in less overt high-risk behaviors but by refusal to take medication and get necessary medical treatment. Dialectical Behavioral Therapy is a well-known treatment modality for teaching emotional regulation and distress tolerance and thus reducing self-injurious behaviors yet very little has been studied about SIB and treatment in older adults. The population for this study was older adults, with a history of SIB, a PD, and depression and/or anxiety. Participants learned an adapted version of Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) as developed by DBT trained therapists. The results provided clinical potentials for the efficacy of DBT to reduce SIB, decrease depression and anxiety in the older adult population.

Keywords : anxiety, depression, dialectical behavioral therapy, personality disorders, self-harm behavior, treatment in older adults

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