

School-Based Social Anxiety and Depression Prevention

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WHAT IS THE STUDY ABOUT?

Researchers assessed the effectiveness of a modified Interpersonal Psychotherapy-Adolescent Skills Training for depression, and incorporated strategies to address other mental health issues such as anxiety. The resulting program was called UTalk, and participants identified as at-risk for both depression and peer victimization were provided with said program.

HOW WAS THE STUDY DONE?

This study was completed by screening for participants using surveys such as the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale. Students with above clinical cutoffs were invited to participate in a baseline evaluation, followed by the UTalk intervention. The UTalk program consisted of 3 individual sessions and 10 weekly group sessions that covered psychoeducation for depression, didactics on communication, and communication role-plays. Four months post-intervention, participants were re-evaluated, and their depression scores were compared to those from baseline.

Interpersonal Skills and Emotional Disorders

- Interpersonal stress is associated with depression in adolescents
- Interpersonal problems are common among adolescents with social anxiety, as they have less social skills than those without anxiety
- The interpersonal challenges of youth with social anxiety or depression make them vulnerable to negative peer interactions, which can further exacerbate their symptoms

WHAT DID THEY FIND?

The study found that measures of depression in participants significantly decreased over the span of the UTalk intervention.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

This study suggests that UTalk's unique characteristics of emphasizing depressive affect, relationships with others, and interpersonal skills are effective alternatives to traditional CBT methods. The fact that this study was conducted with a primarily Hispanic population, indicates applicability for this demographic group specifically.

WHAT CAN SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS DO?

Social workers can look into utilizing the UTalk program for school-based depression interventions, especially with Hispanic students.