Efficacy of Ego State Therapy for PTSD
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Abstract

Despite the theoretical elegance, extensive clinical experience, and compelling evidence of its effects, few controlled studies of its effects meeting evidence-based criteria. On the basis of Ego State Therapy (EST) and its modifications (Christensen & Barabasz, 2012; Barabasz & Christensen, 2010) involving a single co-therapy session of 5-6 hours. Ego State Therapy is a method of psychotherapy that aims to help individuals who have experienced trauma to process their memories and develop new, healthier ways of thinking and behaving. EST is based on the idea that the human psyche is composed of different states or "ego states," each with its own characteristics and functions. The goal of EST is to help clients access and modify those ego states that are causing them distress.

Methods

Participants: The final sample was comprised of 30 patients from a rural university setting (Christensen & Watkins, 2012; Barabasz & Watkins, 2008). Participants were randomly assigned to receive EST or a control condition. The control condition consisted of receiving a DVD that provided the counting method as a coping mechanism. It is possible that the counting method inadvertently exposed subjects in the active control group to potentially beneficial experiences, which could have influenced their outcomes.

Procedures: A telephone interview was conducted which served as a pre-treatment evaluation to determine whether candidates were eligible for the study. Participants were asked to explain their symptoms, if they were currently receiving treatment, and if they were able to schedule a time to have their emotions regulated and to develop new coping mechanisms. The procedure was manualized single session EST intervention for PTSD meeting evidenced-based criteria. The treatment involved a single co-therapy session of 5-6 hours. EST was conducted to help subjects process their traumatic memories and develop new, healthier ways of thinking and behaving. EST is based on the idea that the human psyche is composed of different states or "ego states," each with its own characteristics and functions. The goal of EST is to help clients access and modify those ego states that are causing them distress.

Introduction

Although the theoretical elegance, extensive clinical experience, and compelling evidence of its effects are impressive, few controlled studies of its effects meeting evidence-based criteria. On the basis of Ego State Therapy (EST) and its modifications (Christensen & Barabasz, 2012; Barabasz & Christensen, 2010) involving a single co-therapy session of 5-6 hours. Ego State Therapy is a method of psychotherapy that aims to help individuals who have experienced trauma to process their memories and develop new, healthier ways of thinking and behaving. EST is based on the idea that the human psyche is composed of different states or "ego states," each with its own characteristics and functions. The goal of EST is to help clients access and modify those ego states that are causing them distress.

Results

The findings gleaned from the present study are remarkable when viewed in the context of the past. Our trauma-oriented research team has experienced the emotional and physiological responses of trauma survivors and their families for years. Furthermore, research has indicated a need for new, more effective approaches to treatment. The EST treatment group showed significantly lower PTSD scores at post-treatment versus pre-treatment. The EST treatment group showed significantly lower PTSD scores at one month follow-up (Standardized critical value = 0.99, minimum significant difference = 7.53) and at three months follow-up (Standardized critical value = 0.99, minimum significant difference = 9.73). The EST treatment group showed significantly lower PTSD scores at one and three months follow-up.

Discussion

This was the first full-scale controlled study to investigate the efficacy of a manualized single session EST intervention for PTSD meeting evidenced-based criteria. The findings suggest that EST is an effective treatment for PTSD and may be a valuable addition to the therapeutic arsenal for trauma survivors.