

Self-Compassion and Young Adults Living at Home: A Randomised Controlled Micro-Trial of a Loving-Kindness Meditation



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Purpose

Young Adults at Home

- The number of young adults aged 18 to 24 that are living at home has risen from 50% in 1997 to 57% in 2007 (Mlines, Pegrum & Nebe, 2011)
- Research indicates that it may be linked to more conflict with parents and worse mental (Aquilino, 1997; Dubas & Peterson, 1998) yet it is almost entirely neglected in family health programs

Self-Compassion

- Self-compassion consists of three elements: self-kindness, common humanity and mindfulness
- It is related to a variety of positive outcomes, including better interpersonal relations and mental health (Barnard & Curry, 2011; Neff & Pommier, 2012)

Loving-kindness meditation (LKM)

- LKM over multiple sessions is an established way of improving self-compassion (Galante et al., 2014)
- LKM consists of directing positive thoughts and feelings towards oneself and others through imagery and the repetition of phrases such as "May I/you be safe, may I/you be peaceful"

Our Study

- This study intended to analyse the effects of a single 15-minute LKM on self-compassion and various family outcomes
- Whilst exploring the experiences of living at home and checking the acceptability of LKM and the likelihood of young adults engaging in it

Method

- 100 young adults, living at home with at least one parent, mean age 18.08 years, 86% female
- Randomly allocated to either a LKM group ($n = 51$) or Focused Imagery (FI) control group ($n = 49$)
- Self-report measures were given before and after the audio recording
- Data was analysed in a series of two-way ANOVAs/MANOVAs with condition and fear of self-compassion as predictors

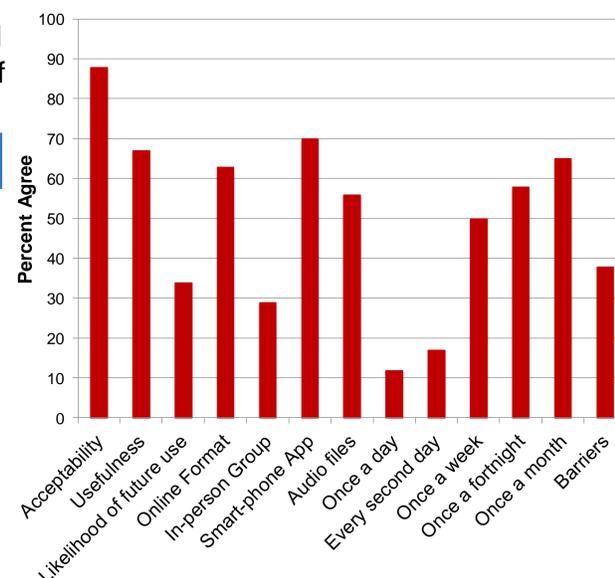
Results

Experimental Findings

- No significant difference between conditions on self-compassion or self-compassionate cognitions, interpersonal reactions to conflict vignettes, nor parental relationship satisfaction measures
- Motivation to be self-compassionate significantly increased in the low fear of self-compassion group, but not the high fear of self-compassion group (see Figure 1)
- Anxiety in response to conflict situations significantly lower in LKM group than FI group



Figure 2: Acceptability of Loving-Kindness Meditation



Exploratory Findings

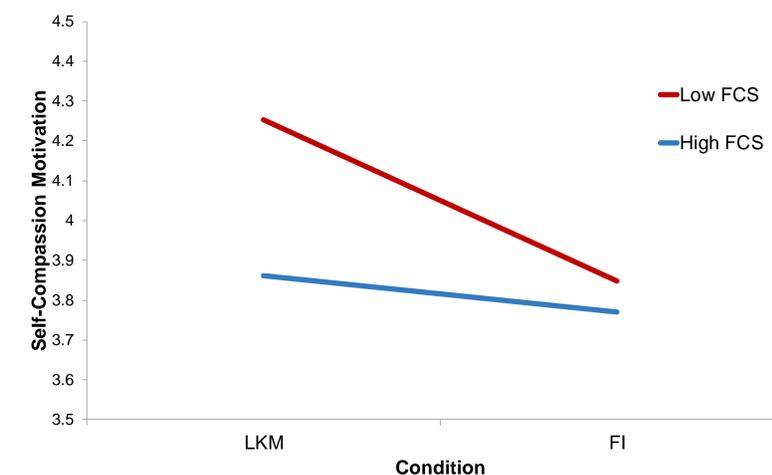
Acceptability (see Figure 2)

- The LKM was found to be acceptable by 88% of participants, and useful by 67%
- The most likely format to be used was as a smart-phone application

Experiences of Living at Home

- The majority of young adults (87%) were satisfied with living at home
- Satisfaction was correlated with better parental relationships, less tension due to living at home and better mental health
- Tension due to living at home was also related to worse parental relationships and mental health, and living at home for financial reasons

Figure 1: Self-compassion Motivation and Fear of Self-Compassion (FSC) Interaction



Implications

There are several implications from this study:

- Young adults rated LKM highly acceptable, indicating it holds promise as a feasible adjunct strategy to be used with clinical interventions
- The delivery of LKM through a smart-phone application for the general population would be useful
- There is low impact from a single session of LKM, thus greater dosage is important
- Most young adults seem to be satisfied with living at home
- The minority that are not satisfied should be the subject of specific interventions to reduce the risk of worse mental health and more conflicting, less supportive relationships with their parents

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