

How are emotion regulation skills involved in treatment of youth depression and anxiety?



Have you ever had difficulty managing your emotions?

1

Lots of people do! Maybe you were anxious about an upcoming deadline or angry when your best friend suddenly cancels on you. When we experience difficult emotions, we use emotional regulation **skills** to manage them!

2

People with depression and anxiety tend to use ineffective skills more often than effective ones:

Effective skills include:

- re-framing the problem
- brainstorming options
- seeking support
- accepting emotions

Ineffective skills include:

- thinking over and over about a problem
- avoiding a problem
- hiding emotions
- distracting oneself



3

Learning effective skills can help people feel **more confident** in their abilities to manage their emotions, which may help prevent and treat depression and anxiety.



THE RESEARCH

- **What did we do?** We investigated whether skills to manage emotions improve during treatment for depression and anxiety in youth aged 14-24.
- **Who did we focus on?** High school or college students, or youth seeking treatment from a community clinic or hospital with anxiety and/or depression symptoms.
- **How did we do it?** We reviewed 141 treatment studies and grouped individual skills into *ineffective* versus *effective* categories.



THE RESULTS

- **Reductions in depression and anxiety** were associated with **improvements in emotion regulation skills**.
- These associations were stronger for treatments in **group formats** (vs. individual), with **>6 sessions**, and with **cognitive-behavioural approaches**.
- Learning **effective emotion regulation skills** was more important for treatment success than reducing ineffective skills or overall skills difficulties.



WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Improving emotion regulation skills is a **common function** of treatments that reduce youth anxiety and depression symptoms!

2

Many types of therapy improve skills to manage emotions! **Ask your health team** about the types of therapy that can improve skills and reduce symptoms.



1

Spread the news about the connection between emotion regulation skills and **mental health and well-being** in youth.

3

Teaching youth how to more effectively regulate emotions **may help reduce and prevent** depression and anxiety.



WHAT TO DO NEXT

4

Government and community initiatives can **raise awareness** of the impact of emotion regulation skills and can **improve access to treatments**.

