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The introspective value of a self-help journal.

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ABSTRACT

Prompted by high stress levels experienced by most people in their daily lives, and the growing field of positive and preventative psychology, a self-help journal programme, called the One Wish Journal, was designed. Based in Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy, Rational-Emotive Therapy and Narrative Therapy, the programme aimed to enhance participants' introspective abilities, particularly their insight and self-reflection, in an effort to improve their subjective well-being.

An experimental and a control group were utilised in the study to compare the results of those who took part in the journal with those who did not. The sample consisted of university students. Both groups completed the Subjective Happiness Scale, the Satisfaction with Life Scale, the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule and the Self-Reflection and Insight Scale at the start, in the middle and at the end of the programme for comparative purposes. In addition, open-ended questionnaires were administered to gauge participants' responses to the programme.

Both statistical and qualitative analyses were conducted. Simple descriptive statistics were used to establish attrition rates during the course of the study and to examine trends in scores through the course of the study. The relationships between the introspective constructs and those of well-being were assessed using Spearman's Correlation Coefficients; changes within the experimental and control groups were assessed using Wilcoxon's Matched Pairs Signed Ranks tests and Man-Whitney U tests were used to compare results between the experimental and control groups throughout the course of the study and to investigate demographic characteristics of the participants. Content analysis and narrative analysis were used to analyse the qualitative components of the questionnaires.

Due to small sample sizes and high levels of attrition, few statistically significant results were found. Self-perceived levels of insight did increase significantly for participants in the experimental group although a larger number of participants would be required to assert meaningful statistical results. Qualitative analyses revealed a number of personal benefits and positive trends experienced by journal participants,

including increased self-appreciation and self-confidence. Participants also demonstrated learning fundamental psychological ideas and acquiring psychological skills through the programme. Qualitative findings suggest that preventative self-help measures may assist some people in attaining significant psychological benefits.

The journal programme was comprised of several aspects; one of which was a bookmark containing descriptions of common forms of irrational thinking and how to inhibit them, as well as positive thinking tips. The bookmark had a number of benefits for participants and has the potential to be developed as an intervention in itself. Unlike prior findings, the programme was not only beneficial to those who were innately invested in notions of self-help, suggesting that self-help benefits may be further reaching than previously thought.