The Therapeutic Value of Blogging by Adolescents Suffering From Social Difficulties

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Introduction

Emotional difficulties during adolescence

Online communication

Expressive writing / diary

Weblog
A blog: an interactive online diary
Purpose of this study

1. Online diary (blog) vs. Private diary
2. Personal distress-focused topics vs. General topics
3. Open to responses vs. Closed to responses

Maintaining a blog concerning social-emotional difficulties, open to responses leads to higher self-image, increased social behaviors, and decreased emotional distress.
Method

Participants

- **1365** adolescents, age 14-17, filled the *Index of Peer Relationship* (IPR).
- **225** respondents, diagnosed by the IPR as suffering from social-emotional difficulties, who did not manage a personal blog, were invited to participate in the study.
- **161** participants finished the intervention.
- The participants were randomly assigned to one of **6 groups** (approximately 30 participants in each):
1. Writing in blog on social difficulties, open to responses
2. Writing in blog on social difficulties closed to responses
3. Writing in blog on general topics, open to responses
4. Writing in blog on general topics closed to responses
5. Writing a private diary in participant’s personal computer, on social difficulties
6. No-treatment control
Measures

Self-report questionnaires

- Social-emotional difficulties scale - *Index of Peer Relationship* (IPR)
- Social activities checklist
- Self-image scale - *Rosenberg Feeling of Inadequacy Scale*

*Other measures: text analysis, expert evaluations, personal interviews*
Procedure

• **Over 10 weeks**, participants in the 5 writing groups were instructed to write (respective to their experimental condition) **at least twice a week**.

• Participants were measured at **pre-** and **post-intervention** time, by all outcome measures, and again **two months following** the intervention.
## Results

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<th>Social Behavior</th>
<th>Peer Relationship</th>
<th>Self-Image</th>
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- Blog on **social difficulties**, **open** to responses
- Blog on **social difficulties**, **closed** to responses
- Blog on **general topics**, **open** to responses
- Blog on **general topics**, **closed** to responses
- Private diary in the personal computer, on **social difficulties**
- No-treatment control

All the results were consistent in the follow up evaluation after two months.
Summary

- Participants who wrote a private diary did not improve in comparison to most of the groups who maintained a blog.
- The intervention of writing a blog about social difficulties caused the greatest gain in comparison to writing about general topics.
- Writing blogs open to responses gained more than those writing blogs closed to responses.
- All of the other measures: text analysis, expert evaluations, personal interviews supported these findings.
Discussion

- Writing cure: writing about the difficulties
- Writing in cyberspace:
  - Integration of private and public
  - Practice social skills
  - Motivation and commitment
- The benefits of maintaining a blog - not just writing but "writing and communicating"
- The importance of feedback

The blog as a therapeutic tool for counselors and therapists: blogs that focus on personal content concentrating on social-emotional difficulties will significantly contribute as long as they will be open to responses and as more the responses will occur.
Thank you for listening

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