

Publication

Self-help for stress and burnout without therapist contact: An online randomised controlled trial

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Interventions designed to reduce stress and burnout may be costly and access is limited. This study examined the effectiveness of a self-help book, using Acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) to target stress and burnout in a randomised controlled online trial without any therapist contact. Participants were recruited through a newsletter of a health insurance company. Participants (N = 119) who reported at least moderate levels of stress were randomly assigned to an immediate intervention (n = 61) or a waitlist group (n = 58). Measures before and after the intervention assessed stress, burnout (primary outcomes), depression, well-being, emotion regulation (secondary outcomes) and ACT-specific constructs. Compared to the waitlist group, participants in the immediate intervention group reported lower stress and burnout and higher psychological flexibility at post-assessment. Effects between groups were large for stress (d = 0.9), moderate to large for burnout (d = 0.5–0.8) and large for psychological flexibility (d = 0.8). All primary and most secondary outcomes and ACT processes continued to improve in the 3-month-follow-up period. Results suggest that an ACT self-help book without any therapist contact is effective in reducing stress and burnout for various occupations. Thus, it may provide a cost-effective public health intervention for reducing stress and burnout.

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