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Cultural reflections in practicing exposure therapy for social anxiety

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Evidence-based practice of exposure therapy has long been adopted as an effective therapy for treating anxiety disorders including social anxiety. In many situations, it is the chosen therapy for such a debilitating disease. Due to its proven efficacy and readiness applicability, it has proven to be the 1st choice of therapy for social anxiety across different life spans from adolescents to geriatrics. Yet, cross-cultural differences have seldom been considered in the approach towards managing social anxiety. Many differences lie between populations and countries in defining what is accepted and what is not with regard to social interactions. Even across the one country, many differences may color the perception of appropriate social communication. Hence, no one-size-fits all can be adopted here. Some interactions are accepted and encouraged while others are basically banned. Thus, during the application of exposure therapy, therapists should modify the conceptual framework while still trying to abide with the fundamental notion of therapy of exposure experiments. In doing this, many therapists may be challenged in their work. While still lacking a strong body of research, clinical experience can provide us with some helpful innovations for successful practice. Our aim is to provide therapists and psychiatrists across the Arab world with tools for applying successful therapy for social anxiety. A series of case studies are discussed to present some innovations in applying Cognitive Behavior Therapy for patients suffering from social inhibitions. Moreover, essentials of past research are reviewed and needs for further research directions in the field are discussed.

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Therapeutic approach to complicated grief—An example of group psychotherapy in psychiatric patients

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Introduction Complicated Grief (CG) affects 7–10% of the grieving individuals in the general population. However, the incidence is much higher in psychiatric patients, reaching 70% in most samples. These individuals present many risk factors for such condition, demanding a particular attention and treatment approach. Most studies have shown that pharmacological treatment may help relieving depressive and anxiety symptoms, although they do not promote a consistent improvement of the grieving scenario. Several meta-analyses have recognized different psychological interventions as effective in dealing with the loss, decreasing psychological suffering and promoting adaptation. It is accepted that the benefits of the intervention overcome any possible harm.

Objectives To evaluate the impact of a group intervention (12 sessions) in pharmacologically stabilized psychiatric patients presenting with CG.

Methods Patient selection was performed through a clinical interview and the fulfilment of the following psychometric tests: Complicated Grief Inventory; the Impact of Events Scale; Beck Depression Inventory; Social Support Scale. These assessment tools were also used to evaluate the impact of the intervention performed.

Results After the psychotherapeutic intervention, there were significant differences in the levels of depressive and post-traumatic stress symptoms.