

Hoffart, A., & Sexton, H. (2002). The role of optimism in the process of schema-focused cognitive therapy of personality problems. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 40, 611-623.

The aim of this study was to examine the determinants and effects of optimism in the process of schema-focused cognitive therapy of personality problems. The sample consisted of 35 patients with panic disorder and/or agoraphobia and DSM-IV Cluster C personality traits who participated in an 11-week residential program with one symptom-focused and one personality-focused phase. This study examines the role played by optimism during the individual sessions of the second phase, using a time series approach. Decreased patient's belief in his/her primary Early Maladaptive Schema and increased patient-experienced empathy from the therapist in a session predicted increased patient-rated optimism before the subsequent session. Increased patient-rated optimism in turn predicted decreased schema belief and distress and increased insight, empathy, and therapist-rated optimism. The slope of optimism across sessions was related to change in most of the overall outcome measures. There appears to be a positive feedback in the process of schema-focused cognitive therapy between decreased schema belief and increased optimism. In addition, optimism appears to mediate the effects of schema belief and therapist empathy on overall improvement, and to serve as an antecedent to decreased distress and to increased empathy, insight, and therapist's optimism.