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Applying the Yerkes-Dodson law and essential oils to the regulation of emotions

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This paper explores the importance of being able to identify, express and regulate the intensity and function of emotions through the use of a number of positive psychology and clinical psychology interventions (PPIs and CPIs respectively). Pilot data indicated that psycho-education of the Yerkes-Dodson law and the role of the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems in emotional regulation were an effective intervention in helping achieve this. It was also observed that combining these with Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) terms such as Reasonable, Wise and Emotional mind proved particularly effective. Once individuals were able to frame low emotional intensity equating to low limbic system activation and high emotional intensity equaling greater activation, they reported feeling more empowered to identify which intervention they could use for emotional regulation and to restore emotional balance (e.g., mindfulness, breathing techniques, physical exercise, relaxation techniques, and distress tolerance). Key to this process was the mindful reflection upon the emotions intensity, efficacy and functionality (i.e., is it appropriate and proportionate to the trigger, is acting or not acting upon the emotion safe to others and themselves and in line with their goals). This requires an individual to pay closer attention to the context of their emotions through either the wide-angle lens of expansive, the zoom-lens of constrictive or and the bare attention. of mindful refection. Thus, individuals had the choice to either let go of, or reflect upon (which could include savoring and gratitude) their emotional experience. Finally, further investigation revealed that combining PPIs and CPIs (particularly mindfulness) with balancing (e.g., lavender or eucalyptus), energizing (e.g., peppermint or lemon), or calming (e.g., chamomile or frankincense) essential oils, as appropriate, improved an individual's subjective rating of their ability to achieve this as well as increasing their reported enjoyment of the intervention.

Biography

Patrick G Gwyer is a Chartered Scientist, Associate Fellow of the British Psychology Society and Chartered Psychologist. He completed his PhD in Applied Cognitive Psychology in 1997 after which he worked as a Research Officer for a UK law enforcement agency. Subsequently, he taught and researched Applied Psychology at the University of Winchester. In 2006, he completed his Doctorate in Clinical Psychology (DClinPsychol) at the University of Southampton. Upon completion of an MSc in Applied Positive Psychology and Coaching Psychology, he specialized in consultancy for individuals and organizations across the adult wellbeing spectrum, focusing on resilience, recovery, wellbeing and happiness. He is also the Clinical Advisor for The Mountain Way a specialist veteran mental wellbeing charity that promotes Post Traumatic Growth for veterans who have experienced trauma as part of their military service.

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