

Living Life to the Full for Older Adults: An Ontario Pilot Project

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Aim

To evaluate the effectiveness of Living Life to the Full (LLTTF) on measures of mental well-being with older adults aged 50+.

Course Overview

LLTTF is a collaborative, 12-hour, 8-week course based on cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) principles. The course is delivered to groups of 10-15 people, and provides participants with skills to cope with life's challenges.

Project Outline/Methodology

Local partnerships were built between 15 Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) branches and 16 older adult centres in communities across Ontario. Each partnership was responsible for delivering two LLTTF courses. Participants were self-referred via community advertising. All participants were invited to participate in the study. Study participants completed measures of quality of life (WHO-QOL BREF), and mental well-being (WEMWBS) before the course began (T1), immediately post-course (T2) and 3 months post (T3), and a measure of course satisfaction (CSQ-8) at T2. A clinical study was also conducted. Clinical research participants completed additional measures of depression (BDI-II), and anxiety (BAI), at T1, T2, and T3. As a measure of participants' cognition, a score was calculated by adding items 13 and 19 on the BDI-II, which represent indecisiveness and concentration difficulty, respectively.

Demographics

	Overall Study (n=222)	Clinical Study (n=91)
Gender	89% female	87% female
Age	73% 65-84	74% 65-84
Education	54% university degree or higher	53% university degree or higher
Marital Status	56% single/divorced/widowed	52% single/divorced/widowed
BDI-II	N/A	Average score at baseline 14.84 (mild range)
BAI	N/A	Average score at baseline 9.83 (mild range)

Key Results

Focusing on pre to post-course, participants exhibited statistically significant improvement on measures of well-being. More specifically, participants' symptom levels of anxiety ($t(55) = 2.99, p = 0.004$), depression ($t(52) = 4.85, p < 0.001$), cognition ($t(53) = 4.59, p < 0.001$), QOL psychological domain ($t(107) = -3.11, p = 0.002$) and mental well-being ($t(175) = -3.88, p < 0.001$), significantly improved after attending LLTTF. These improvements were maintained 3 months post-course for all measures: anxiety ($t(38) = 2.81, p = 0.008$), depression ($t(34) = 4.20, p < 0.001$), cognition ($t(35) = 3.40, p = 0.002$), QOL psychological domain ($t(97) = -3.82, p < 0.001$) and mental well-being ($t(134) = -7.22, p < 0.001$). Furthermore, the QOL social domain became statistically significant after 3 months: ($t(90) = -2.56, p < 0.05$). Over 90% of participants said they were satisfied with the program and would recommend it to a friend.

Conclusions

The results demonstrate that CBT-based group education sessions can lead to sustainable improvements for older adults. The LLTTF course is an effective method for improving symptoms of depression and anxiety, and enhancing quality of life, cognition, and overall well being for seniors when delivered in a community setting. Additional social benefits of a group course are present months after course completion.

Significance

This is the first study to examine the effectiveness of LLTTF for older adults. CBT based sessions delivered in a community setting can be beneficial for an older adult population.

Implications for Practice or Policy

LLTTF classes should be made available to self-referred groups in community settings.

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