

Title of Intervention: A Dental Anxiety Desensitization Intervention

Intervention Strategies: Supportive Relationships, Group Education

Purpose of the Intervention: To reduce dental anxiety

Population: Patients with dental fear

Setting: Health care facility-based

Partners: None mentioned

Intervention Description: Participants were assigned to either self-control desensitization procedure or education and discussion.

- Supportive Relationships: Participants in the self-control desensitization procedure group went through a training that provided them with self-control coping skills they could use to reduce dental anxiety. Participants learned techniques of muscle relaxation and imagery in first two sessions. The desensitization process allowed them to relax and visualize items three separate times for a minute. Participants were allowed to handle dental instruments and ask questions about dental procedures.
- Group Education: In the education and discussion group, participants were taught methods for more effectively dealing with dentists and dental procedures. This group also discussed its dental anxiety.

Theory: Social Learning Theory

Resources Required:

- Staff/Volunteers: Session leaders
- Training: Not mentioned
- Technology: Not mentioned
- Space: Area to hold sessions
- Budget: Not mentioned
- Intervention: Dental instruments, educational materials
- Evaluation: Printed questionnaires

Evaluation:

- Design: Post-test only
- Methods and Measures:
 - Questionnaire to find out details of client's dental fear
 - Coral Dental Anxiety Scale to measure participants' anxiety
 - Clinic records to assess participants' dental appointment making

Outcomes:

- Short Term Impact: The desensitization group was associated with a significantly greater reduction in anxiety than the education and discussion group and the control group.
- Long Term Impact: The self-control desensitization and education and discussion groups resulted in more dental appointment making and visitation behavior than the control group.

Maintenance: Not mentioned

Lessons Learned: Efforts to desensitize and educate patients with dental fear can help increase their dental health visits and reduce fear.

Citation(s):

Gatchel R.J. Effectiveness of two procedures for reducing dental fear: group-administered desensitization and group education and discussion. J Am Dent Assoc. Oct 1980;101(4):634-637.