



Mini Review

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Inquiry Based Well-Being: A Novel Third Wave Approach For Enhancing Well-Being and Quality of Life - Mini Review



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Inquiry-based Well-being (IBWB) is a meditation technique developed by Byron Katie in 1986. In the clinical-therapeutic setting, it is also called "Inquiry-Based Stress Reduction" (IBSR). It aims to identify and investigate stressful thoughts by a series of questions and turnarounds [1,2]. It is not defined as a type of therapy, but rather an additional tool for questioning cognitions in psychotherapy.

The technique includes two main phases. The first part is to identify the thoughts that cause stress and suffering, in a systematic and comprehensive way by using the "Judge your neighbour" worksheet (Appendix 1), and to write down the thoughts about various situations perceived by the person as being stressful (such as marital relationship, work place, body image). The next stage is an inquiry of the thoughts by a set of four fixed questions:

- 1) Is it true?
- 2) Can I absolutely know that it is true?
- 3) How do I react when I believe that thought?
- 4) Who would I be without the thought?

This part is meditative and the participants are guided to search the true and genuine answers to the four questions with no certain agenda. After answering the four questions, the participants are guided to practice the turnarounds. For example, if the original thought is 'He is angry at me', possible turnarounds can be: 'I am angry at myself' (turnaround to the self), 'He is not angry at me' (turnaround to the opposite), 'I am angry at him' (turnaround to the other). This practice gives the participants the opportunity to experience a different interpretation of the reality as they perceive it. This technique does not require any intellectual, religious or spiritual preparation, but rather a will to deepen and reach self-awareness [1-4].

IBWB share the same fundamental assumption as the classical Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), that dysfunctional beliefs and interpretations are the main cause of distress and problematic behaviors. Its process of cognitive restructuring is qualitatively different from CBT [5,6]. In CBT, the goal is to challenge the content of the dysfunctional cognitions by reasoning and argument, which encourage a more rational and objective interpretation of reality. Clients often succeed in reaching this functional-rational insight, but not an emotional one, which is more associated with therapeutic change [7]. In IBWB, the inner wisdom is addressed rather than the rationality [6]. It is the integration of all kinds of knowing, such as observation, logical analyses, kinesthetic and sensory experiences, behavioral learning and intuition. It is the part of each person that can know and experience truth. It is characterized by having a certain peace, and the discoveries emerging from it as an emotional insight, an 'Aha!' moment or, a 'felt shift' [8].

The uniqueness of IBWB is the combination of in-depth inquiry of stressful thoughts with the process of cognitive defusion [9], which aims to detach people from their maladaptive thoughts by recognizing them as a separate part from reality. This combination can provide a bridge between the second and the third waves of Cognitive behavior therapy [10].

It is estimated that IBSR has been practiced by hundreds of thousands of people in more than 30 countries. Its well-structured protocol makes the technique easy to learn and to implement. Like cognitive-behavioral therapies from the second and third waves, which demonstrated a positive effect on various problems, IBWB was also found to be effective on multiple psychological scales among various samples. For example, it was shown to improve sleep quality, level of fatigue and health-related quality of life among breast cancer survivors [11]. A study with BRCA1/2 mutation carriers, women with

increased risk of developing cancer, has shown improvement in the scale of perceived family support, a significant coping source for this population [12]. The qualitative analysis of this study demonstrated that IBSR positively affected three central dimensions, which were found to be related to psychological well-being: inner-emotional world, experience as a BRCA carrier and interpersonal interactions [13]. Another study has shown that the technique is effective in alleviating levels of burnout among high school teachers (a well-documented phenomenon in that profession) and enhancing their psychological well-being [14]. In addition, it was found to be applicable among people with HIV in order to better help them cope with their own limiting perceptions and thoughts regarding their disease [15,16].

In non-clinical samples, IBWB was found effective on various psychological scales, such as chronic stress [17], depression, anxiety and hostility [18], depression, anger and quality of life [19], as well as stress, level of satisfaction, well-being and sense of coherence [20,21].

Given the clinical efficacy of IBWB as a tool for promoting well-being, further research with larger samples and more rigorous methods is recommended.

Conflict of Interest

None declared.

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