EMOTIONAL CONNECTION: DEVELOPING A MOBILE INTERVENTION FOR SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DYSFUNCTION

THE PROBLEM

Mental health issues cause relationship problems due to difficulties in emotion perception.

Emotional distress hinders emotion perception by causing people to ignore positive emotions in favor of negative ones.

STUDY: Can a mindful breathing intervention reduce distress to improve emotional perception?

PROCEDURE

Sample = 80 adults

INTAKE SESSION (2-4 hrs)
Assessed for psychiatric diagnoses

TRAINING SESSION (1.5 hrs)
Randomly assigned: 3 conditions; stressor tasks (all)
HABITUATION - tone if stress reduces
MINDFUL BREATHING INTERVENTION (MBI) - practice skill during stressor; tone if stress reduces
CONTROL - no tone

TESTING PHASE (7 days)
Mobile prompts 6x per day
MBI - hear tone/practice skills if high distress

ONLINE SURVEY (0.5-1 hrs)
Self-report measures & emotional perception tasks

RESULTS

An intervention that combines in-person training of mindful breathing and phone-based reminders to practice those skills:

- Improves perception of others' positive emotions
- Reduces perception of others' negative emotions

In the training session, the MBI led to higher accuracy for perceiving positive emotions than the control condition.

OUTCOME

% of correct scores when perceiving happy/angry faces in emotional perception bias task

DISCUSSION

Mindful breathing skills lead to positive bias

Results in a tendency to shift attention to positive social cues instead of negative ones

MOVING FORWARD

Develop entirely digital version

Test, fix bugs, improve version

Disseminate intervention to community