

Depression is a widespread problem, which impairs both people's well-being and ability to function (References). According to the XY survey (Reference), major depression is one of the most common mental disorders in the United States with 7.1% of all U.S. adults having at least one major depressive episode in their life. In addition, it is estimated that depression plays a role in more than half of all suicide attempts (Reference).

Recent research has shown that depressed people suffer from various cognitive biases. First, depressed people tend to pay more attention to negative aspects of their life compared to healthy people (Reference). Second, depressed people also tend to interpret their experiences more negatively (Reference). Third, depressed people tend to have better memory for negative aspects of their life (Reference). It has been suggested that these cognitive biases could play a role in both causing and maintaining depression (Reference).

As yet, there is no treatment that is designed to address these cognitive biases. Existing treatments of depression often assume that depression is caused by an unprocessed trauma and that the key to treating depression is to enable the patient to process that trauma. However, recent evidence shows that the effectiveness of these treatments is limited (References). In fact, if depression is caused by cognitive biases, there is the danger that these treatments further encourage attention to negative past events and thus maintain cognitive biases.

Based on these considerations, the REFOCUS treatment has been developed, which trains people to focus more on positive aspects and less on negative aspects of their life (References).

.....

The goal of the present article is to test the effectiveness of the REFOCUS treatment. For this purpose, we randomly assigned people with a clinically diagnosed major depression to either a REFOCUS treatment group or a placebo treatment group and compared self-

reported levels of depression before and after the treatments. We hypothesized that depression would decrease more after the REFOCUS treatment compared to the placebo treatment.