

The influence of automatic thoughts and behavioral coping on depressive symptoms.

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The purpose of this study was to develop a behavioral coping scale and examine the influence of automatic thoughts and behavioral coping on depressive symptoms. In study 1, university students (N=334) were asked to respond to 35 questions regarding behavioral coping. Factor analysis showed that the scale included six factors: “problem-examination coping”; “emotional expression coping”; “avoidance/escape coping”; “effective distraction coping”; “direct approach coping”; and “writing coping”. The reliability and validity of the overall scale were confirmed.

In Study 2, the relation between the behavioral coping scale from Study 1, the Automatic Thoughts Questionnaire-Revised (ATQ-R), and the Zung Self-rating Depression Scale (SDS) was analyzed by structural equation modeling (SEM). The results indicated that: (1) “problem-examination coping” influences “depressive symptoms” indirectly via norms regarding “negative expectation for future”. (2) “emotional expression coping” influences “depressive symptoms” indirectly via norms regarding “negative thoughts toward the self” and has a direct effect on “depressive symptoms”. (3) “avoidance/escape coping” influences “depressive symptoms” indirectly via norms regarding “negative thoughts toward the self”.

Results showed that automatic thoughts influenced depressive symptoms directly. On the other hand, behavioral coping influenced depressive symptoms indirectly. To decrease the depressive symptoms, approaching both the automatic thoughts and the behavioral coping may be the most effective technique.

It is effective with depressive symptoms to offer assistance such as changing negative thinking into rational thinking, encouraging the use of other coping techniques to decrease “avoidance/escape coping”. As for the other coping techniques, “problem-examination coping”, “direct approach coping”, “emotional expression coping” may be more effective techniques.