**CORE EMOTIONAL REGULATION TRAINING COMBINED WITH DIFFERENTIAL REINFORCEMENT FOR REDUCING ESCAPE-RELATED EMOTIONAL OUTBURSTS**

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**Objectives:**In school settings, individuals with developmental disabilities (DD) often display maladaptive behaviours related to underlying deficits in emotion regulation (ER). These ER deficits may be exhibited in the form of escape-related emotional outbursts, which can significantly interfere with academic achievement. When supporting individuals with DD to reduce emotional outbursts, focusing on core ER deficits is crucial. However, many behaviour-based interventions in school settings neglect the importance of ER training as it is perceived as resource-intensive. ER training may also be overlooked because many individuals with DD struggle to conceptualize abstract material and finding suitable ER training strategies can be difficult. The current study aimed to examine whether the escape-related emotional outbursts of a student with DD could be reduced using a brief intervention that targeted core ER training, in addition to the more commonly used behavioural intervention strategy of differential reinforcement of alternative behaviours (DRA).

**Method:**The participant in this single-subject study was a 20-year-old male student diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), intellectual disability (ID), and attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), who was attending special education at a high school. Prior to data collection, emotional outbursts and adaptive replacement behaviours were operationally defined and revised for reliability. To capture the severity of the behaviours, duration recording was used for data collection. Along with DRA, a brief intervention focusing on core ER deficits was implemented by a training therapist who was acting as an in-class support person during the COVID-19 pandemic. To maintain fluency between professionals, the implementor also acted as a liaison between the participant and the licensed school social worker. The targeted ER techniques taught during the intervention were tailored to the participant using a dialectical behavioural therapy (DBT) skills training manual adapted for individuals with DD. Using an A-B design and the PEM analysis method, treatment durations for emotional outbursts and the use of response modulation were compared to the baseline levels.

**Results:**In this preliminary study, the participant demonstrated an 83% reduction in emotional outbursts from an average of 60 minutes a day during baseline to 10 minutes a day by the end of the intervention. The participant's use of adaptive response modulation techniques increased from zero minutes a day at baseline, to an average of 5 minutes a day. Qualitatively, it was observed that the participant became increasingly motivated to use the adaptive ER strategies, which resulted in higher engagement in class activities.

**Discussion/Conclusions:**The findings of the study provide preliminary evidence that decreases in escape-related emotional outbursts can be achieved using brief, targeted interventions focused on core ER training combined with DRA. However, the single-subject design greatly limits the generalizability of the results. More research is needed to determine the long-term effectiveness of ER training with individuals with DD and replicating the findings with a larger sample of participants is an important next step. This study also emphasizes the positive impact in-class support people can have in special education classrooms, which is particularly relevant when managing challenges posed by the pandemic.

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