

Ignite Your Spirit: Depression Study

Pilot study of personal development and energetic healing group program among people with depression

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In 2008, Shakti Durga and Doctor Jagatambe Narayani ran a pilot study at the Sydney Harmony Centre that assessed the efficacy of an Ignite Your Spirit group program from people with moderate to severe depression.

The “The Wellness Study” ran over eight weeks and participants were taught about the relationship between the symptoms of depression and a suboptimal energy body. They were taught skills from the Path of Ease and Grace for cleaning and sweeping the aura, grounding, dealing with emotions, dealing with unhelpful thoughts, improving self-esteem, and ways to connect with the Divine and ignite the spirit through meditation. Every week Shakti Durga led a healing meditation and each participant also received one individual IYS healing throughout the course of the program.

The research involved collecting baseline data (demographic data, clinical interview and self-report symptom questionnaires), and conducting follow-up assessments (repeating baseline data collection and assessing treatment received) following the eight-week IYS group intervention. A baseline, mid, and post treatment self-report questionnaire was also administered to track changes in depression, anxiety and stress over time. Finally, participants were invited to provide qualitative feedback and testimonial at the end of the study.

The results are statistically and clinically significant. The main findings are described below:

Baseline demographics

- 🍏 Mean age 43.52 (19-63)
- 🍏 Predominately female 21 (77.8%)
- 🍏 Australian born 19 (70.4%)
- 🍏 Largely single, never married 10 (37.0%) or divorced 7 (25.9%)
- 🍏 With one or more children 15 (55.5%)
- 🍏 However most 21 (77.8%) did not have children living at home
- 🍏 Most lived with a partner 11(40.7%) or alone 8 (29.6%)
- 🍏 Majority renting 14 (51.9%)
- 🍏 About half were unemployed 13 (48.1%) and on government benefits 14 (51.9%) as a primary source of income

Pre and post treatment findings

Depression

Of the 27 participants who began the study, 20 completed the program follow-up, a good retention rate among this population. To be eligible for the study at baseline, participants had to register moderate to severe levels of depressive symptomatology and have a diagnosis of depressive disorder confirmed by their mental health professional or GP. The mean level of depression among the group at baseline, as rated on the depression scale of the Depression Anxiety and Scale (DASS) was 27.1, which is severe to extremely severe depression. By follow up this had significantly reduced to 10.5 [$t(19) = 6.05, p < 0.001$], classified as mild depression (where below 10 on this scale is normal), as displayed in figure 1.

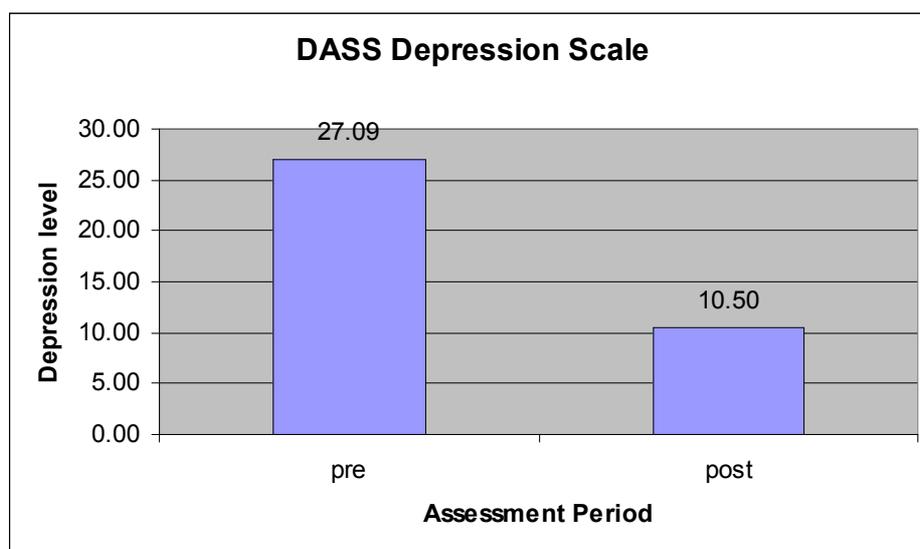


Figure 1: Depression scores pre and post treatment

Anxiety

Levels of anxiety were also significantly reduced from the severe to normal range [$t(19) = 4.04, p < 0.001$] as displayed in figure 2.

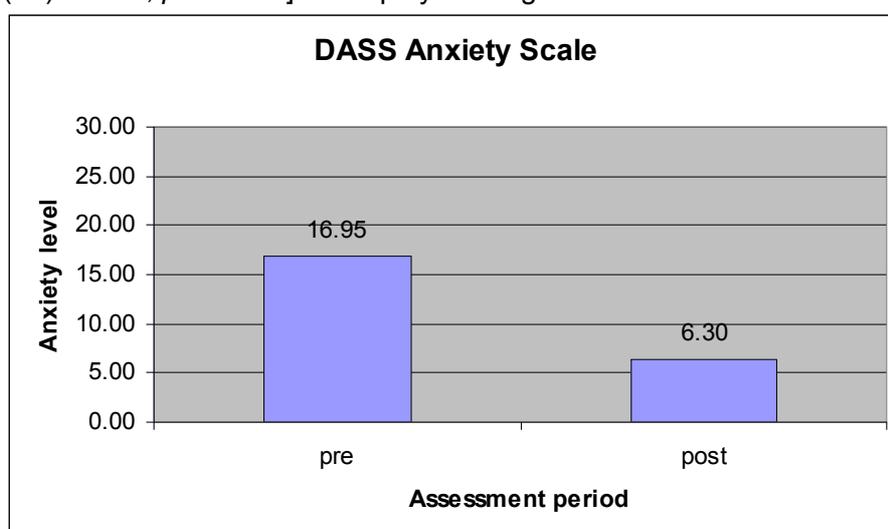


Figure 2: Anxiety scores pre and post treatment

Stress

Levels of stress were also significantly reduced from the moderate to normal range [$t(19) = 5.81, p < 0.001$] as displayed in figure 3.

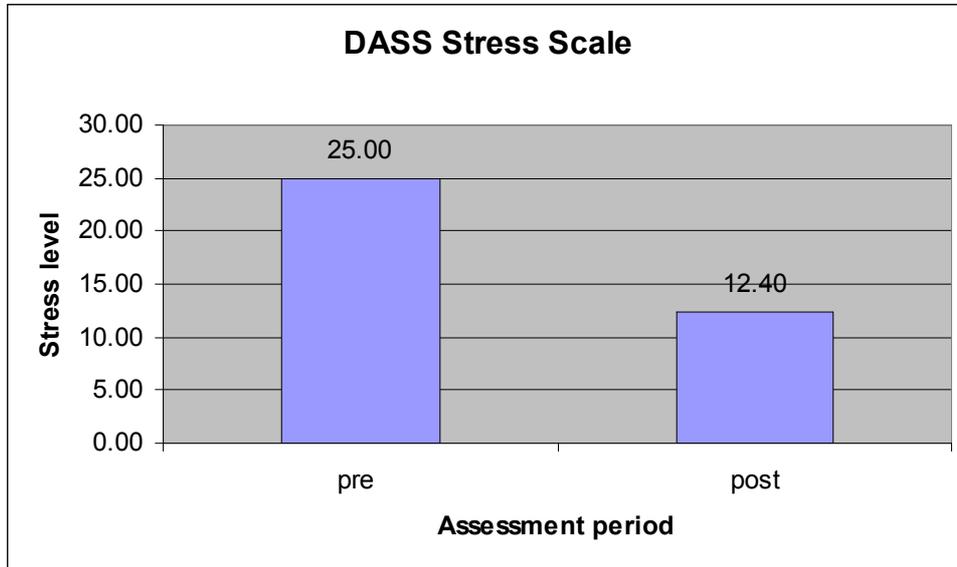


Figure 3: Stress scores pre and post treatment

Life satisfaction

Life satisfaction significantly improved [$t(19) = 4.13, p < 0.001$] as displayed in figure 4. The normative range for Western means is 70-80 points. The normative range for Australia is 73.4 – 76.4 points. This was a vast change for such a short period (8 weeks), as group means are generally stable over time.

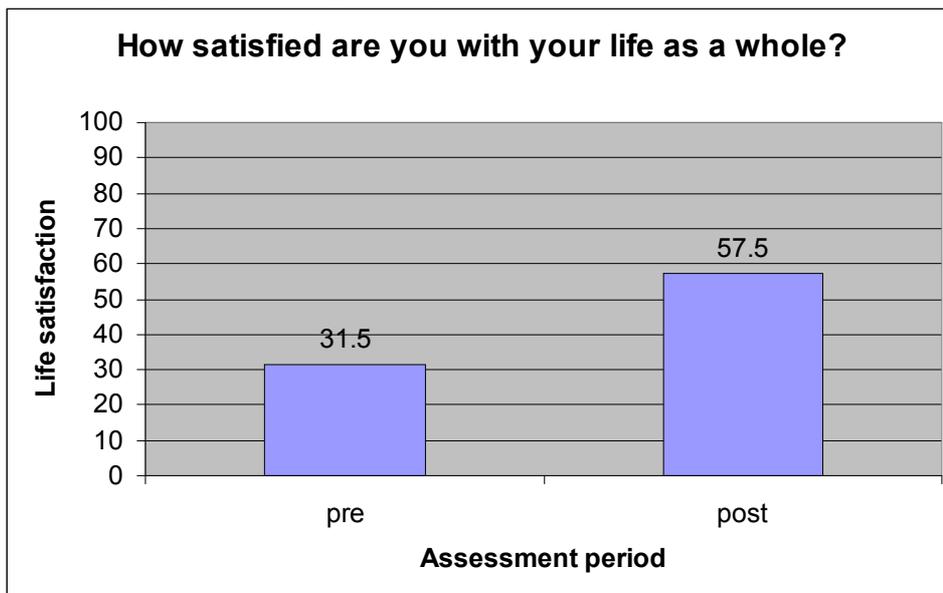


Figure 4: Life satisfaction scores pre and post treatment

Self esteem

Self esteem significantly improved [$t(19) = 3.62, p < 0.01$] as displayed in figure 5.

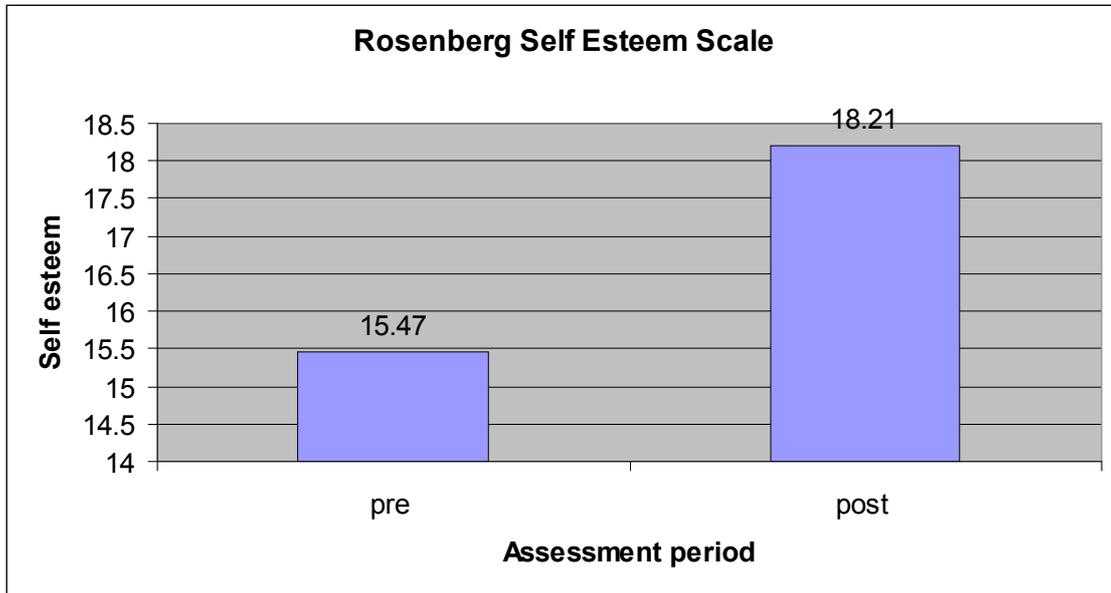
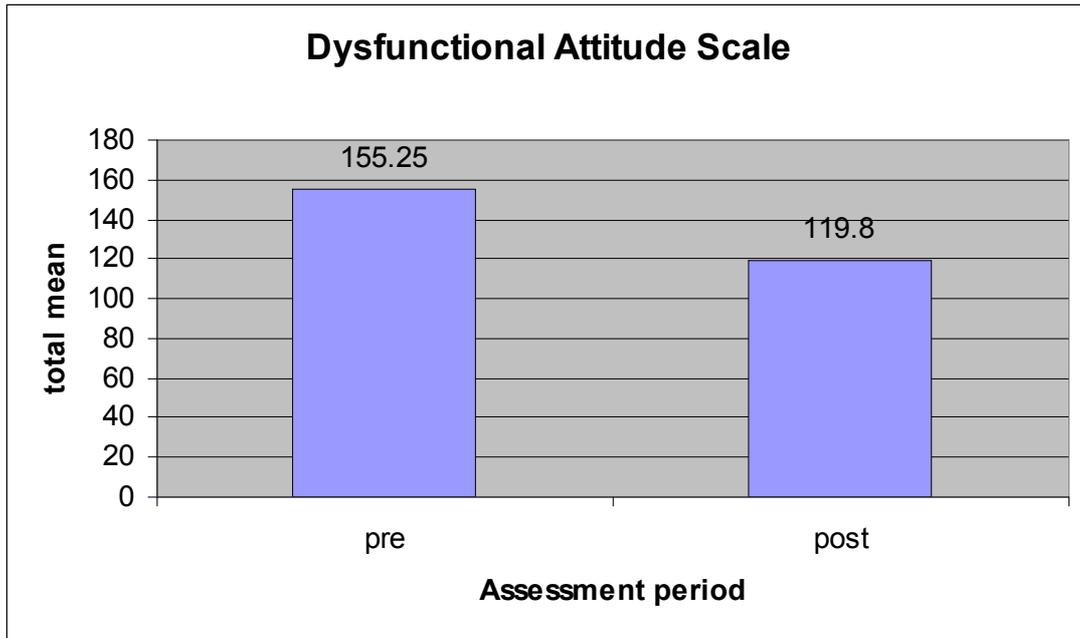


Figure 5: Self esteem scores pre and post treatment

Dysfunctional Attitudes

There was a significant reduction in dysfunctional attitudes, (depressionogenic “schemas” constituting predispositions to depression) [$t(19) = 4.15, p < 0.01$] as displayed in figure 6. This was a clinically significant reduction, bringing the mean score for the group into the normal range for the adult general population whose mean (SD) was reported to be 115 (26) in an analysis of 35 normative samples (Dozois, Covin, & Brinker, 2003).



Clinical observations and testimonials

The majority of participants displayed marked clinical and psychosocial changes including a reduction in depression, anxiety and stress, improved quality of life, improved relationships and improved general functioning. Others reported quitting smoking, improved sleep, increased energy and exercise, and reduced physical pain.

Here are some of the testimonials:

What I enjoyed about this group was that it gave me an opportunity to explore my own spiritual truth & give myself permission to heal, rewrite my internal monologue & nurture myself with positive affirmations. The focus was not on anxiety and depression but on healing symptoms through meditation, breath work & belief in self as a healing agent.

Anonymous

Coming to the Harmony Centre has given me the tool to cope with my depression and anxiety. During that time I haven't had one thought of hurting myself or having negative self talk. I have felt the change in myself and feel much calmer and happier with my life and within. My husband commented that I look different, for the better.

Antje, 51

In week one when I arrived I had to hold onto the rail and help pull myself up the stairs and slept on the train coming and going. Everything was an enormous effort so things did not get done. During week seven I swam a total of 2km, rode a bicycle 5km, walked more than 20km and went out with new friends. I will continue to radiate myself with light, love and peace and be grateful for the energy I draw into myself and the wonderful experiences of life that happens now. I do this with my god, teachers and friends.

Damien, 53

I went to the course suffering from bad depression: symptoms included memory loss, sleep disturbance, loss of emotions and motivation, chronic fatigue and negative thinking etc. The program helped me in ways I did not expect; slowly the giant obelisk of dark stone is being chipped away. I'm no longer suffocated and crushed in the great depths of cold and dark ocean, I have love and gratitude now. I'm able to see my thoughts more as the powerful and wondrous connection to the supreme. I am responsible to my spirit and my life. To be taught the connection between myself and the supreme is a great gift as is the love and nourishment given at the centre.

Michael, 40

I wholeheartedly recommend the group to anyone experiencing depression, self doubt, or needing direction and clarity in their lives. A very loving and nurturing environment with fantastic facilitators who teach and guide you with skills, tools, knowledge and encouragement to heal your life.

Jenny, 46

The emptiness, utter hollowness, meaninglessness & despair that haunted my life previously have transformed into a consciousness that has finally experienced the tremendous joy and brightness of being. Through the blessed study, through the guidance, love, support and healing of Shakti Durga and Jagatambe and other helpers, the lights have come on inside me and have shone out the darkness. The shadow now shines and I feel like a being reborn, I have opened the door to the happiness that was sitting patiently within me- and have returned to my true self. This study, this journey, has been a spiritual awakening and has significantly altered every aspect on my life. If you are suffering from the unbearable pain, heaviness, emptiness, confusion of depression and/or anxiety, I whole heartedly urge you to take part in this study. But be prepared for a completely different life.

Conclusion

The results of the statistical analyses reflect the profound clinical changes observed in, and reported by the group. This important research will pave the way for future larger sponsored studies investigating these valuable Path of Ease and Grace tools. Stay tuned to a Harmony Centre near you!

References:

Ignite Your Spirit Therapy – Shanti Mission. www.shantimission.org Copyright 2013. All rights reserved.

Dozois, D. J., Covin, R., & Brinker, J. K. (2003). Normative data on cognitive measures of depression. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 71(1), pp.