

EMOTION FOCUSED COUPLES THERAPY AS A TREATMENT OF
SOMATOFORM DISORDERS: AN OUTCOME STUDY

by

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ABSTRACT

Sixteen couples in which one of the partners met criteria for Somatoform Disorder or Undifferentiated Somatoform Disorder as determined by the SOMS and who scored less than or equal to 101 on the Dyadic Adjustment Scale participated in this study. These couples were randomly assigned to eight sessions of emotionally focused therapy (EFT) or to a 12-week wait-list condition. The purpose of the study was to investigate the efficacy of EFT as a treatment of somatoform disorders. Results suggest that the treatment intervention (EFT) was not effective in the treatment of somatoform disorders. A significant effect (.023) was found in the increased reporting of symptoms at posttest. Implications for EFT and marriage and family therapy are discussed.

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my late grandmother, Caryl Joan Schwab Burwell Zimmer, who personally taught me about medical family therapy through her experience with a chronic, debilitating illness. Her decade struggle with Syringomyelia taught me about human paradox—that one can be strong on the inside, even if the body is weak; that one can maintain dignity while suffering; and that one can be fearful and courageous at the same time.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This randomized clinical trial was a challenging undertaking and I have many people to acknowledge. They say it takes an entire village to raise a child and I think the same holds true for completing a dissertation. It has taken a village--a chair, a committee of mentors, a group of dedicated therapists and volunteers, and encouragement from colleagues, family, and friends--to nurture and shape this dissertation. During the course of my study, I was often encouraged and discouraged. Fortunately, I had some great people to work with and depend upon when things seemed impossible—my village.

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