Experiential avoidance moderates improvement in affect through a CBT-focused ecological momentary intervention

PRESENTER:
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Introduction

- Who benefits most from app-based CBT skill practice after psychiatric hospitalization?
- Hypothesis: People higher in baseline experiential avoidance (EA) will show greater pre-to-post improvements in momentary affect after skill practice, because app prompts provide the structure to engage with emotions they would otherwise avoid.

Methods

- Participants: N=76 adults recently discharged from inpatient psychiatric care at two hospitals (open trial + RCT treatment arms).
- Measures: Brief Experiential Avoidance Questionnaire (BEAQ) at baseline; single-item positive affect (PA)/negative affect (NA) (0-10) per prompt.
- Analysis: Mixed-effects models of EA moderating changes in pre-to-post affect; simple slopes at -1 SD, mean, +1 SD.

Procedure:

BEAQ at Baseline

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1-3 **CBT Sessions** (mindful emotional awareness, cognitive flexibility, and changing emotion-driven behaviors)

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28-day **ecological momentary intervention** (pre-skill affect rating → skill practice → post-skill affect rating)

Patients with **higher** (vs. lower) baseline **experiential avoidance** showed **greater improvement in momentary affect** following CBT skill practice via a smartphone app.

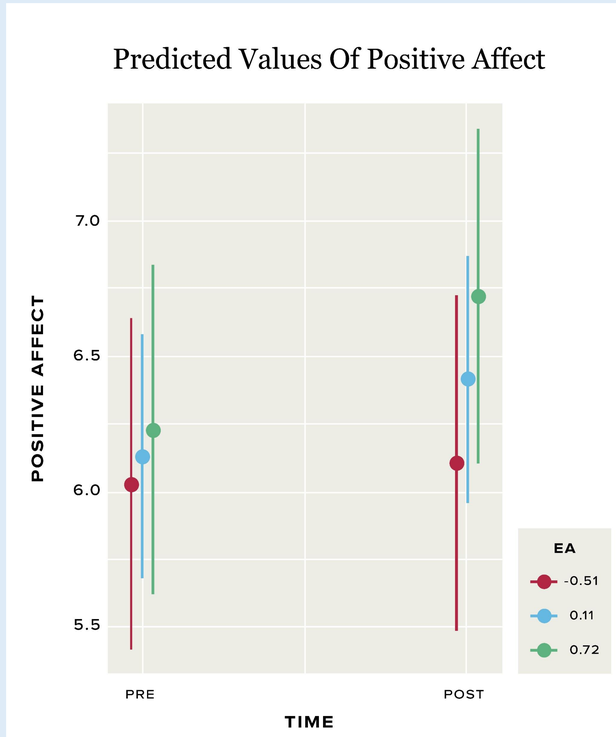


Fig. 1. **Different levels of EA as a moderator of changes in positive affect from pre- to post-EMI skill practice.**

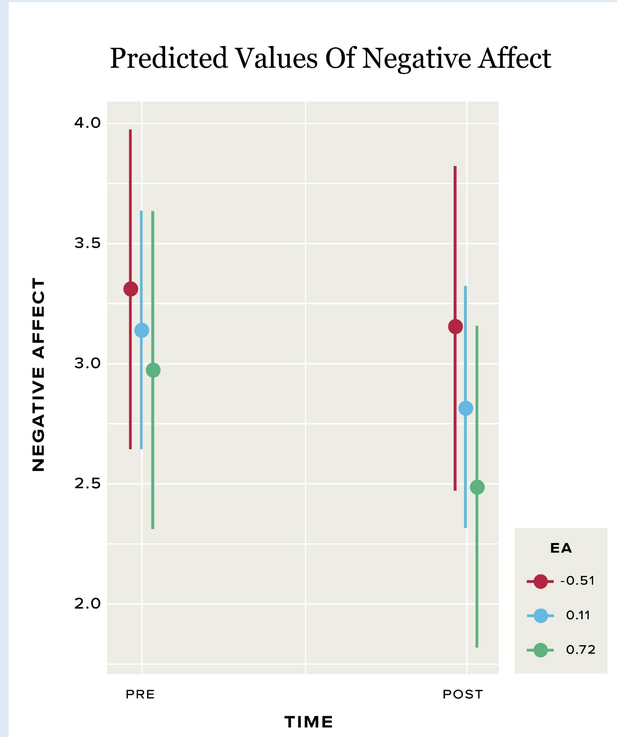


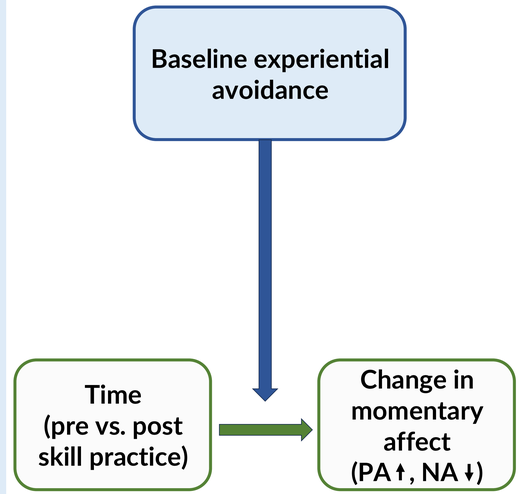
Fig. 2. **Different levels of EA as a moderator of changes in negative affect from pre- to post-EMI skill practice.**

Scan here to **view** the **full paper**

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Results

- Mood improved from before to after each skill practice: positive affect rose (b=0.31, 95% CI=[0.22,0.41]) and negative affect fell (b=-0.34, 95% CI=[-0.44,-0.25]).
- High EA was associated with greater within-episode improvements in affect: positive affect rose at average and high EA but not low EA (Fig 1), while negative affect fell at all EA levels, most steeply at high EA (Fig 2).



Discussion

- CBT-based EMI skill practice improved mood in the moment after psychiatric hospitalization, with the largest gains among high-EA patients.
- The brief, structured, practical format of CBT-based EMI may be especially well suited to high-EA patients, who may be less likely to engage in emotional skill practice unprompted.

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