THE MIND Bulletin on Mind-Body Medicine Research

Mind-Body Medicine Research Council

Abstract

Can Participants´ Self-efficacy be Changed Through a Community-based Lifestyle Intervention? Results of the Healthy Lifestyle Community Program (HLCP)

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doi: 10.61936/themind/2024121214

Background: The implementation of healthy behaviors, especially a healthy and varied diet, can make a significant contribution to the prevention of chronic diseases and their risk factors. A high self-efficacy (SE) can be a relevant resource for putting planned behaviors into practice.

Methods: A 24-month controlled, non-randomized intervention study (Healthy Lifestyle Community Program, cohort 2 [HLCP-2]) was conducted, which included a 10-week intensive lifestyle intervention aiming to improve NCD risk profile and a 22-month less intensive alumni phase. The control group (CG) received no intervention. At six measurement time points over two years, the action, maintenance and recovery SE regarding a healthy diet, based on the HAPA model (Health Action Process Approach), were assessed using questionnaires. Inter- and intra-group comparisons were conducted.

Results: A total of 186 participants (intervention group [IG]: n = 111; CG: n = 75) were analyzed. Participation in the HLCP-2 led to a significant increase of action SE, maintenance SE and recovery SE in the IG at all measurement time points compared to the control group and baseline. For all three parameters, the effect was highest after the intensive phase (10 weeks) (inter- and intra-group comparison: $p \leq 0.001$).

Conclusion: The HLCP-2 is effective in increasing participants' SE over the study period. The reason for this could have been the participatory and interactive design of the lifestyle intervention program, in which participants were encouraged to find their own way to a healthy lifestyle. It is now interesting to see to what extent a high SE is related to an actual change in health behavior.

Keywords: lifestyle medicine, nutrition, physical activity, stress management, behavior change, community-based participatory research