

# Promoting flourishing\* in persons with psychosis

## A systematic review and meta-analysis of positive psychology interventions

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### Background

While recent years have seen a renewed optimism regarding recovery in persons with psychosis, it has been argued that most interventions are overly focused on symptom reduction.<sup>1</sup> Central to **Positive Psychology**<sup>2</sup> is the idea that positive and healthy aspects of life are not simply the opposite of distress and disorder. In other words, reducing negative emotions does not necessarily increase positive feelings, resilience, and the experience of purpose and meaning. This resonates with the ideas behind the **Recovery** Movement as well as acceptance- and mindfulness based interventions. The aim of this study was to synthesize findings of positive psychology interventions for people with schizophrenia spectrum disorders.

### Method

A systematic literature search according to the PRISMA guidelines using relevant databases and manual searches. The outcome measures used were positive emotions, compassion, mindfulness and subjective well-being. Interventions included individual therapy, group training and group therapy



\*Living within an optimal range of human functioning, one that connotes goodness, generativity, growth, and resilience

### Results

Twelve studies, comprising 411 persons with a schizophrenia spectrum disorder met inclusion criteria. As can be seen in Figure 1 and 2, the effect sizes were moderate to high in the controlled studies and low to moderate in the uncontrolled studies. Heterogeneity was low to moderate, but there were important variations in terms of methodological quality (average quality was in 'medium' range<sup>3</sup>).

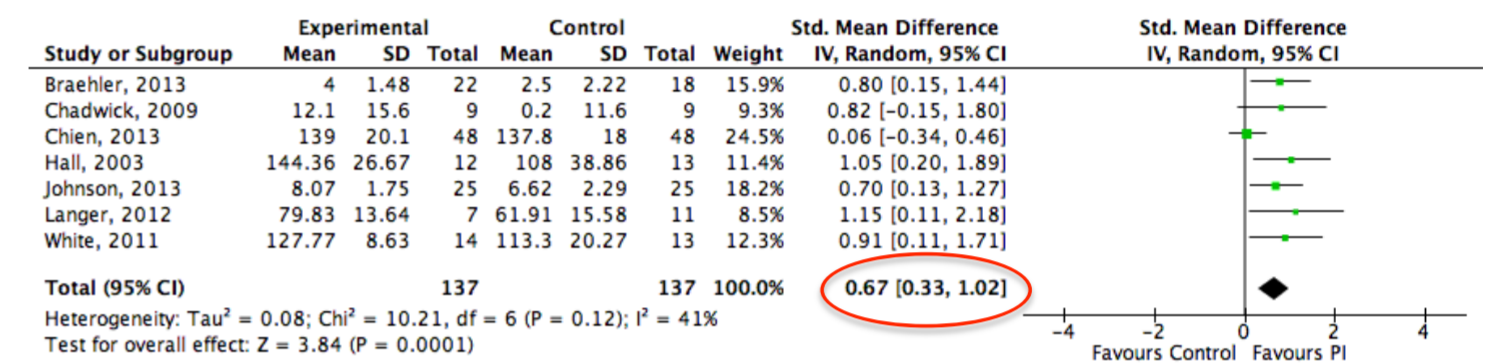


Figure 1. Forest plot of controlled studies with positive psychology outcomes

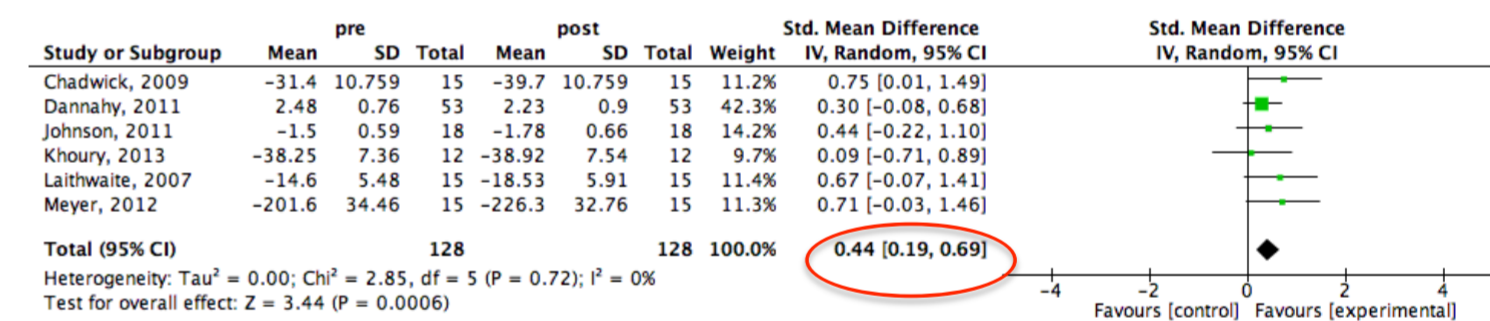


Figure 2. Forest plot of uncontrolled studies with positive psychology outcomes

### Conclusion and clinical implications

The positive psychology interventions show promise in increasing positive feelings, positive behaviors, or positive cognitions. However, notable methodological limitations and heterogeneity needs to be taken into consideration when interpreting the findings, and more controlled studies are needed. This warrants further research into the mechanisms by which these interventions work and how they may expand on the existing interventions. Enhancing positive emotions, well-being and social connectedness may induce 'positive spirals' that can buffer against stress and relapse and thus promote long term recovery and maintaining treatment effects.

<sup>1</sup>Seligman, M & Csikszentmihalyi, M (2000)

<sup>2</sup>Alvarez-Jimenez et al. (2010)

<sup>3</sup>Downs and Black (1998) (Checklist for methodological quality)