

How to help psychologically survivors of wars: A study on Rwanda orphans

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A group of German investigators performed a controlled study on psychological help for Rwanda orphans of war.

Twenty-six orphans (originally 27) who presented with posttraumatic stress disorder ([PTSD](#)) at first assessment continued to meet a PTSD DSM-IV diagnosis 6 months after their initial assessment. They were offered participation in a controlled treatment trial. A group adaptation of interpersonal psychotherapy (IPT, n = 14) was compared to individual narrative exposure therapy (NET, n = 12).

The last NET session involved guided mourning. Each treatment program consisted of 4 weekly sessions. Main outcome measures were diagnostic status and symptoms of PTSD and depression assessed before treatment, at 3 months post-test and at 6 months follow-up using the Clinician-Administered PTSD Scale, Mini-International Neuropsychiatric Interview, and Hamilton Rating Scale.

At post-test, there were no significant group differences between NET and IPT on any of the examined outcome measures. At 6-month follow-up, only 25% of NET, but 71% of IPT participants still fulfilled PTSD criteria. There was a significant time × treatment interaction in the severity of PTSD [p

Individual NET in combination with group-based mourning comprises an effective treatment for traumatized survivors who have to bear the loss of loved ones and have been suffering from symptoms of PTSD and

depression.

More information: Schaal, S. ; Elbert, T. ; Neuner, F. Narrative Exposure Therapy versus Interpersonal Psychotherapy. *Psychother Psychosom* 2009;78:298-306

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