

A new form of psychotherapy for suicidal patients

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In the current issue of *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics* a study discloses the long term effects of a particular form of psychotherapy in suicidal patients. Abandonment psychotherapy is a 3-month, twice-a-week, manualized cognitive-psychodynamic intervention that specifically targets the abandonment experiences and fears that are considered the cardinal feature of borderline personality disorder. It focuses on difficulties with romantic relationships that are common correlates of suicide attempt among these patients and depression.

170 participants were randomized to three treatment groups: [abandonment](#) psychotherapy delivered by certified psychotherapists (AP-P: n = 70), abandonment psychotherapy delivered by nurses (AP-N: n = 70), and treatment as usual (TAU: n = 30).

The most important finding of the study is that abandonment psychotherapy maintained its advantage over intensive treatment as usual, 3 years after the initial assignment. At the 3-year follow-up, patients who had received abandonment psychotherapy continued to have better ratings on measures of diagnosis and symptom improvement than patients assigned to treatment as usual. The durability of the superior results of abandonment psychotherapy over treatment as usual is indicated by the lack of differences between treatment groups when the analysis was performed considering time elapsed after treatment to the 3-year follow-up.

Overall, the study suggests that abandonment psychotherapy may speed

up remission among patients with [borderline personality disorder](#), acute depression, and [suicide attempt](#), even though abandonment [psychotherapy](#) did not grant superior long-term protection from the first suicidal relapse and hospitalization in this study.

More information: Yvonne Burnand et al. "Abandonment Psychotherapy" for Suicidal Patients with Borderline Personality Disorder: Long-Term Outcome, *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics* (2017). [DOI: 10.1159/000475885](https://doi.org/10.1159/000475885)

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