Can humor help treat depression and anxiety?

June 21 2023

An analysis of published studies suggests that humor therapy may lessen symptoms of depression and anxiety.
For the analysis, which is published in *Brain and Behavior*, investigators identified 29 relevant studies that included a total of 2,964 participants and were conducted in nine different countries. Participants had depression or anxiety and included children undergoing surgery or anesthesia; older people in nursing homes; patients with Parkinson's disease, cancer, mental illness, or receiving dialysis; retired women; and college students. Examples of humor therapy included medical clowns and laughter therapy/yoga.

Most participants thought humor therapy lessened their depression and anxiety, but some considered the effect to be insignificant.

"As a simple and feasible complementary alternative therapy, humor therapy may provide a favorable alternative for clinicians, nurses, and patients in the future," the authors wrote.


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