

Body image therapy in eating disorders: Influencing of perceptive, cognitive-affective, and behavioral components of the body image

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In eating disorders, a negative body image can be manifested in an overestimation of one's own body dimensions (perceptive component), negative body-related thoughts and feelings (cognitive-affective component), and body avoidance and checking (behavioral component). Objective: This study examines whether these three components of a disturbed body image can be improved by means of a cognitive-behavioral body image therapy. Method: 24 female patients with eating disorders were examined before and directly after ten sessions of body image therapy as well as after a 3-month follow-up period. Results: While the perceptive component of body image could not be influenced by body image therapy, strong improvements in the cognitive-affective and behavioral component were observed. The patients' eating disorder symptoms and general strain were also reduced. These effects remained stable over the follow-up period. Conclusions: Results of this study provide first hints of the effectiveness of body image therapy in eating disorders.