

Never Say Never to Learning – Dynamic Cognitive Intervention (DCI) for persons with Severe Mental Illness

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to describe evidence-based research carried out in populations related to the field of mental health, based on the theories and work done by Prof. Reuven Feuerstein. These studies originated from Hadas-Lidor's Dynamic Cognitive Intervention (DCI) approach, which is derived from Feuerstein's Structural Cognitive Modifiability theory. DCI is specifically intended for enhancement of therapeutic-based relationships with a direct emphasis on emotional-related issues and the way they affect cognitive development.

One of the populations in which functional-cognitive abilities may be compromised is the population of people coping with mental disorders, due to effects of the illness and/or medication side effects.

The outlook for people diagnosed with mental illness has improved in the past several decades due to reasons related to brain research development, third generation medications and various psychosocial and cognitive treatments. These have allowed those coping with mental illness to achieve meaningful recovery, manage residual symptoms, and lead productive lives. Yet additional efforts are needed to consolidate these improvements and help more people with mental illness to reach these goals.

Due to the negative effects of mental illness, positive communication skills and abilities may be compromised, whether for those coping with mental illness themselves, or for those providing care for them either professionally or as family members. In order to enhance learning and cognition, improve communication and instill hope and meaning for all involved, the DCI approach provides a basis for various interventions related to mental health that promote resilience, participation and recovery.

DCI incorporates use of Mediated Learning Experiences, exercises from Feuerstein's Instrumental Enrichment program, and additional tools developed, such as reading and writing tasks, utilization of personal picture albums and Meaningful Interactional Life Episodes (MILES). The studies reviewed in this

article include evidence for the benefits of DCI based interventions structured for those coping with mental illness, family, and professional caregivers.

Keywords

Feuerstein, Mental Health, Recovery, Caregivers, cognitive intervention