

Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

Monday, 11 January 2016

Can self-help books relieve anxiety?

Surviving the stressful Christmas/ New Year period could prove to be a little easier with the use of a self-help book.

A team of researchers at the University of Tasmania, including Dr Kimberley Norris, is determined to discover the answer to the question: can self-help books alone treat stress and anxiety?

The study aims to test the effectiveness of treating a number of anxiety disorders such as social anxiety disorder, generalized anxiety disorder and panic disorders, with self-help books rather than face-to-face treatments.

“There is a belief that self-help books have been successful in the treatment of a number of disorders,” Dr Norris said.

“However, most of these self-help books have not been evaluated to see if they are effective. This is problematic because consumers should be confident that the self-help books that they are purchasing are backed up by evidence.”

Anxiety disorders are extremely common with approximately one in three people suffering from an anxiety disorder at some point in their lifetime.

Not only are anxiety disorders a burden on the individual, they also impact society and the economy, costing billions of dollars per year in medical, psychiatric, workplace and pharmaceutical costs.

Although cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) administered by a psychologist is effective, many people have difficulty accessing this treatment due to barriers such as access, long waits, cost and stigma.

“There is growing interest in simplified forms of treatment and the development of easily accessible, evidence-based, and cost-effective treatments, such as self-help interventions. Research in this area is proving promising.

“We hope to find that individuals will show a significant reduction in their anxiety symptoms as indicated by self-report and clinician administered interviews from pre

to post treatment, as well as rating the self-help book as an acceptable treatment option.”

Individuals aged 18 years or over that meet criteria for social anxiety disorder, generalised anxiety disorder, or panic disorder and have access to the internet, may be eligible to participate in this study.

Participants are required to undertake an initial diagnostic interview, as well as complete weekly online questionnaires during the eight week treatment.

Information released by:

University of Tasmania, Communications and Media Office

Phone: 6324 3218

Email: Media.Office@utas.edu.au