

Original Article

The Effectiveness of Communication Imagery Training (Imago Therapy) Approach on Post-Traumatic Growth and Development in Couples with Spouse Infidelity

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Abstract

Background and Aim: Marital infidelity is a shocking issue for couples and families and a common phenomenon for counselors and therapists. This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of the communication imagery (imago therapy) training approach on post-traumatic growth and development in couples with marital infidelity.

Materials and Methods: This semi-experimental study was carried out on two experimental and control groups with a pretest and posttest design. The statistical population of the study included all the women referring to one of the counseling centers in Tehran, during 2018-2019 due to marital conflicts, problems related to satisfaction, and the need for the improvement of marital relationships. They were selected by convenient sampling method. Imago therapy treatment was performed in 10 weekly sessions (90 minutes) for participants in experimental group. The control group was placed on a waiting list. Data were collected based on post-traumatic growth and development questionnaire and descriptive and inferential statistical methods and multivariate analysis of covariance were used using SPSS.22 software.

Results: The results showed that communication imagery training (imago therapy) was effective on post-traumatic growth and development ($F=92.17$, $P<0.001$) in couples with infidelity.

Conclusion: It can be concluded that communication imagery training (imago therapy) helps couples to acquire skills to heal past wounds and separate marital relationships from past influences by understanding their unconscious processes.

Keywords: Communication imagery, Post-traumatic development, Couples

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Introduction

Marital infidelity is a shocking issue for couples and families and a common phenomenon for counselors and therapists (1). Extramarital affairs cause a lot of confusion for couples. The results show that most people expect monogamy and avoid extramarital affairs from their spouses (2). When a person's spouse betrays him, the person is at a crossroads; On the other hand, separation destroys the family, the loss of a spouse who may still love him, and resolving disputes means that he still has to live with the wounds of infidelity and accept the risk of another infidelity (3). In a recent study with a large sample of approximately 22 to 25 percent of men and 11 to 15 percent of women in the United States, they reported having had sex outside of their marriage at least once. Between 1.5 and 4 percent of married people engage in extramarital sex each year, and over the past year, men have twice as much illicit sex as women (4).

Although research in this field (post-injury consequences after failure) has been a major part of studies in the field of relationship failure consequences, it is not the only aspect that has attracted the attention of researchers. Several researchers believe that difficult life events often change people's beliefs and value systems (5). Post-traumatic evolution theories also suggest that people can make the biggest changes in their lives during a crisis. The most common types of evolutions reported are positive changes in self-perception (increased self-reliance), interpersonal relationships (feeling closer), and philosophy of life (change in life priorities) (6).

One of the treatments that can improve post-traumatic cognition is communication imaging therapy (imago therapy). Imago therapy (communication imagery) is an approach in which couples are informed and, more importantly, taught to be aware of the subconscious aspects of their relationship and to examine the root of their conflicts, rather than trying to solve them superficially (7). This view believes that the developmental stages during childhood, especially the initial relationship with the parents, affect the marital relationship. Choosing a spouse in a marital relationship is not just a conscious process, but an important part of the unconscious, and the result is the

need to complete the unfinished stages of childhood and heal emotional wounds. In this way, spouses can learn skills to heal childhood wounds and develop healthy behaviors by understanding the subconscious processes in themselves and their spouses, and by transforming marriage and the subconscious relationship into a conscious marriage, they can achieve the love and intimacy they need (8). The communication imagery approach combines an education and treatment program to help couples improve their relationships (9). In this regard, the results of Seidabadi *et al.* (10) research showed the effectiveness of imago therapy on reducing marital conflict in women showed that imago therapy has been able to reduce conflict in general.

Given that couples faced with infidelity face many problems and psychological, social, and emotional damage that the sum of these pressures causes tension in various dimensions, the regulation of their emotions and beliefs and thoughts and interpersonal relationships is difficult. Turns. It is worth mentioning that communication imaging interventions (imago therapy) can be very effective in reducing the problems of these couples because these therapeutic approaches help to relax and reduce the stress caused by the problems. Therefore, by providing appropriate conditions, it is possible to control the stress caused by problems and in different dimensions to affect their positive internal capabilities and strengthen the tolerance and adaptability of the person in dealing with problems. Finally, it can strengthen useful performance and interpersonal relationships in them and regulate their emotional process. Research in this field confirms the view that effective treatment approaches to the problems of couples faced with infidelity can have beneficial effects on the quality of life of the couple in society, so research in this regard is considered important and necessary. Therefore, in the present study, it is considered whether the approach of communication imaging (imago therapy) training affects the growth and development of post-traumatic stress disorder in couples faced with infidelity.

Methods

This semi-experimental study was carried out on two experimental groups and one control group with a

Table 1: Content of Imagotherapy Sessions

Sessions	Content
First	Introduction and contract, the goals of this communication session, the decision to make a responsible effort to improve the relationship, motivation by stating a brief history of marital problems and what goals they pursue and what they do in their lives by attending the counseling session. Will change. These goals were pursued by getting to know the members and getting to know each other, explaining the working method and goals of the meetings, and committing to the spouse and group members to use the insights gained in the meetings to improve the relationship. The pre-test was performed in this session.
Second	Planning for future relationships, the goals of this meeting include assessing the possibility of progress in the relationship and getting to know each other. These goals can be achieved by writing personal rules and a common list that includes the desired aspirations, qualities, and characteristics in the current relationship and what they wished for in their relationship, as well as familiarity with the spouse's list of opinions, comparison, and finding similar items and Determining the common list was followed by saying sentences in the simple present tense, for example, we have fun together.
Third	Raising self-awareness, the goals of this session include discovering and reviewing memories, discovering the main failures of childhood and how to react, cultivating a suitable mental image, for example, finding positive and happy memories, and imagining your childhood based on those memories. These goals were pursued by returning to the childhood home and reviewing memories, writing down the positive and negative characteristics of parents and their impact on the individual, identifying unmet childhood needs and negative emotions, and examining childhood failures and how to respond to them.
Fourth	"Knowing your spouse", the goals of this meeting included deep knowledge of the spouse, reviewing the secret agenda, and its impact on the current relationship. These goals were pursued by expressing the positive characteristics of the spouse, for example, being kind and responsible, the negative characteristics of the spouse, such as nagging and being nervous, comparing the characteristics of the spouse with his / her mental image.
Fifth	Unfinished work from childhood and learning to communicate consciously, the objectives of this session included recognizing each other's emotional wounds, getting to know each other's needs and problems, and sending effective and clear messages to each other. These goals will be accomplished through training and practice of conscious conversation or conversation with couples. Talking to couples will be a three-part process that includes reflecting, acknowledging, and empathizing. During it, men and women will be taught to pay attention to each other intentionally and intentionally according to this three-part process. Sharing the results of the third and fourth sessions with the spouse was followed according to Hendrix's theory.
Sixth	"Closing the exit routes", the objectives of this meeting will include creating mutual commitment and ensuring togetherness, increasing the level of intimacy, meeting needs, identifying couples' conflicts and their conflict resolution styles. These goals were followed by determining the exit routes of the spouse and planning to close the exit routes and mutual agreement. Couples will write on each sheet of paper a list of common types of outcomes, such as overeating, working late, spending too much time with children, or anything else they did just to stay away from their spouse. The list will then be compared to the spouse's list of outcomes and eventually agreed upon by the couple, who will close the outlet and spend most of their time together and resolving issues.
Seventh	Refreshing romantic memories and improving the relationship, the goals of this session will be to create a safe zone, increase intimacy and heal emotional wounds, create positive cycles of interaction, increase positive reciprocal behaviors and reduce negative behaviors. These goals were pursued by reviewing past good behaviors and memories, determining current ways to please a spouse, identifying unmet needs and desires, offering unexpected gifts, and engaging in fun activities together.
Eighth	Learning new behaviors, the goals of this session will be to increase the feeling of security and connection, increase the feeling of happiness and emotional connection. These goals will be pursued through the practice of evacuating and controlling anger constructively and examining the unfinished and unresolved situation of the past. Thus, the first step in performing this exercise was that a separate piece of paper would provide a complete list of all the things the spouse was suffering from, such as when does their spouse make them angry? When does it upset him? When does it cause fear, suspicion, suspicion, disgust, resentment, or anger? Then, in another separate piece of paper, you were taught the desire and desire that was written positively behind each of the despair and complaints, for example, I like the tone of your voice to be natural when you are angry and upset.
Ninth	Draining anger and excitement, the objectives of the meeting included expressing and draining anger in a safe and constructive environment, reducing and resolving past resentments, healing emotional wounds. These goals were pursued by summing up different parts of the denied self, the lost self, the false self, and the true self. In these exercises, couples learned that when they are offended or angry with each other, I am angry with you by saying that I am offended by you, and would you like to listen to me? He informed himself of his feelings. Then, the person who was in charge of the supporting role took a few deep breaths and embodied that his wife, now in an expressive or expressive role, was hurt and wounded child, so he expressed his desire to listen to his wife's feelings, and then the expressive person briefly shared his resentment or anger with him.
Tenth	The goals of this session were to recover the lost self and to accept the false and denied self of individuals so

that after making positive and adult changes, they can reach their first perfection and unity at birth in a unified, harmonious, and balanced order. With this exercise, people's self-awareness of the changes they had made increased. At the end of this session, the contents of the summary, conclusion, and integration were done and the questionnaire was administered at the end of this post-test session.

pretest-posttest design. The statistical population of the study included all the women referring to one of the counseling centers in Tehran, Iran, (i.e., Ganj-e-Daroun Flourishing Counseling Center, Rah-e Sevom Center, and welfare-related centers) during 2018-2019 due to marital conflicts, problems related to satisfaction, and need for the improvement of marital relationships. The study population was chosen based on convenient sampling after the random screening. The inclusion criteria were interest and commitment to active and regular attendance at therapy sessions, no history of severe mental and emotional disorders, and no addiction, conflicts, and problems related to marital infidelity. Exclusion criteria were the absence of more than two sessions in treatment sessions. The ethical considerations of the present study were as follows: all subjects received written information about the research and participated in the research if they wished. It was assured that all information was confidential and would be used for research matters. Participants' names and last names were not registered to respect their privacy.

To observe ethical and professional issues, the researcher obtained voluntary consent from all research samples, and to motivate the members of the control group, while thanking and appreciating all the women who were replaced in the control group, he invited all the women who were replaced in the control group to participate in couple therapy or individual sessions for free after completing the training courses and can also participate in the couple therapy or individual sessions for free after the completion of these three months. Benefit from the educational resources and workshops held by the researcher for free or with special discounts, as well as if this training is effective after the completion of the research work in the process of one of the two interventions. The Imago therapy program was designed by Hendrix in 1990 to increase the relationship between couples, improving childhood wounds, and improving the differentiation of couples (11).

Materials

Post-Traumatic Development Questionnaire

This questionnaire was developed by Tedeschi & Calhoun in 1996 to measure personal achievements after the traumatic event and has 21 questions and 5 subscales related to others, new opportunities, personal strength, perception of life value, and spiritual change. Each question has 5 options from zero (I have not experienced this change in the wake of the crisis) to 4 (I have experienced this change greatly in the wake of the crisis) (12) and measures three positive post-traumatic changes that include: changes in self-perception, changes in relationships with others and changes in the philosophy of life. The minimum score is zero and the maximum is 0.84. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the whole questionnaire was 0.90, for the subscales of communication with others was 0.85, new opportunities were 0.84, personal strength was 0.72, spiritual change was 0.85 and the perception of life value was 0.67 and test-re-test reliability coefficients (distance 0.72). For the whole questionnaire, 0.71 was reported for three subscales of communication with others, new opportunities and spiritual change from 0.65 to 0.71, personal strength 0.67 and perception of life value 0.83 (12).

The following statistical methods were used to analyze the data: statistical methods, descriptive methods such as mean, standard deviation, Levin test (to examine observing the assumption of variance equality of variables), and Skewness and Kurtosis tests (to observe the normality of distributing scores in the society). Analysis of Covariance was used to test the hypotheses by SPSS.22.

Results

The Mean (\pm SD) age in the experimental group was 42.43 (\pm 8.02), and the control group was 40.86 (\pm 8.71). Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of growth and development of post-traumatic stress in the experimental and control groups.

Table 2: The mean and standard deviation of growth and development of post-traumatic stress by assessment stage in the groups.

Variables		Pre-test		Post-test	
		M	SD	M	SD
Communication with others	Experimental	9.73	1.53	20.27	2.37
	Control	11.33	2.82	10.67	2.44
New opportunities	Experimental	7.27	1.16	13.33	2.74
	Control	8.33	1.88	7.53	1.85
Personal power	Experimental	6.33	1.80	10.80	1.70
	Control	6.93	2.09	6.00	2.45
Understanding the value of life	Experimental	3.53	1.55	8.87	1.64
	Control	6.27	1.53	4.53	1.68
Spiritual change	Experimental	2.53	1.36	5.47	1.41
	Control	3.13	1.36	2.53	46.1
Total	Experimental	29.40	3.20	58.73	6.56
	Control	36.00	4.14	31.27	4.35

Table 3: Multivariate analysis of covariance analysis of internal coherence scores and control behaviors in three groups.

Statistical Index/ Effect	Test	Value	F	Df hypothesis	Df error	P	Eta coefficient
The difference between the two groups and the pre-test effect control	Pillai's Trace	1.06	14.25	6.00	76.00	0.001	0.53
	Wilks Lambda	0.04	52.74	6.00	74.00	0.001	0.81
	Hotelling's Trace	24.20	145.22	6.00	72.00	0.001	0.92
	Roy's Largest Root	24.10	305.20	3.00	38.00	0.001	0.96

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of growth and development of post-traumatic stress in the experimental and control groups. Since the M-box test was not significant for any of the research variables, the condition of homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices was correctly observed. Finally, the non-significance of any of Levene's test variables indicated that the condition of equality of intergroup variances was observed. The amount of variance of the dependent variable was equal in all groups. Finally, examining the results of Mauchly's sphericity test showed that this test was significant for all variables, and therefore the assumption of the equality of variances within the subjects (Sphericity assumption) was not observed (Mauchly's $W=0.45$, $P<0.001$). Therefore, the Greenhouse Geiser test is used to evaluate the univariate test results for intragroup effects and interactions.

As shown in Table 3, there is a significant effect on the "variable" group factor after removing the pre-test effect by multivariate analysis of covariance. This effect indicates that there is a significant difference between at least one of the variables of internal coherence and controllable behaviors of couples faced with marital infidelity who were treated with couple-controlled marital infidelity ($P<0.001$).

As can be seen in Table 4., the difference between imago therapy and the control group is significant at the 0.05 level. Therefore, considering the means, it can be said that the method of imago therapy had a greater effect on increasing the components of post-traumatic growth and development than the control group.

Discussion

This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of

Table 4: One-way analysis of covariance analysis in the text of multivariate analysis of covariance.

Statistical index/variable	Source of change	SS	Df	MS	F	P	Eta Square
Communication with others	Group	691.20	1	691.20	119.27	0.001	0.63
	Error	162.27	28	5.80			
New opportunities	Group	252.30	1	252.30	46.15	0.001	0.54
	Error	153.07	28	5.47			
Personal power	Group	172.80	1	172.80	38.89	0.001	0.48
	Error	124.40	28	4.44			
Understanding the value of life	Group	140.83	1	140.83	50.90	0.001	0.57
	Error	77.47	28	2.77			
Spiritual change	Group	64.53	1	64.53	31.44	0.001	0.40
	Error	57.47	28	2.05			
Growth and development of post-traumatic	Group	6946.87	1	6946.87	41.82	0.001	0.68
	Error	6478.19	28	16.11			

communication imaging training (imago therapy) on the growth and development of post-traumatic stress in couples faced with infidelity. The results showed that communication imaging training was effective on significantly increasing the components of post-traumatic growth and development. The results of research on the effect of communication imaging training on increasing post-traumatic growth and development were in line with the results of research (13-16). For example, the results of a study showed that communication imagery training increased the empathy of young couples (17). In another study, Tae et al. reported that communication imagery training increased the attitude of love of couples referring to Ahwaz oil counseling centers (18). Aslani et al. also concluded that communication imaging training increases the overall score of the quality of marital relationships of couples referring to the family counseling center and the dimensions of satisfaction in the relationship, the amount of time couples spend with each other and conflict management and

reducing the likelihood of separation and There was a lot of disagreement (19). Although the population of this study (women affected by marital infidelity) is significantly different from the population of previous studies (couples without marital infidelity), but the result of this study was consistent with the results of previous studies that can be explained He said that when an educational and therapeutic method (communication imagery) has appropriate theoretical and research support, it can be effective in improving the psychological characteristics of different groups, including the empathy of women affected by marital infidelity.

Explaining this finding based on the theory of Hendrix et al. (11), it can be said that communication imagery training helps women to acquire skills for healing past wounds and separating marital relationships from the effects of the past by understanding their subconscious processes. As a result, the conditions for understanding empathy, creating healthy communication and constructive expression of anger and negative emotions

are provided. Communication behavior training strategies also provide the basis for increasing intimacy and constructive communication, which improve the perceptual perspective of women affected by marital infidelity. Another explanation is that communication imagery training alleviated the anxiety caused by negative experiences and helped women to better understand the nature of their dissatisfaction and react with positive emotions, which first increases empathy and marital intimacy and facilitates responding to the feelings of the husband and Finally, it increases the perceptual perspective of women affected by marital infidelity. The results of research on the effect of communication illustration training on increasing forgiveness were in line with the results of Ardalani (20). In a study, Ardalani concluded that imago therapy training significantly increased the willingness to forgive in unfaithful couples who referred to the judiciary in Isfahan (20).

Explaining this finding based on the opinion of Gehlert et al. (21), it can be said that communication imagery training improves the ability to exchange unpleasant emotions, the ability to engage, control or escape from a negative emotion properly, which in turn modulates negative emotions. Moreover, the increase in excitement becomes pleasant. Also, communication imagery training for women affected by marital infidelity provided an opportunity to rebuild the relationship and strengthen re-trust in the spouse, which increased the ability of the affected women to forgive. Communication Imaging Training for Women Affected by Marital Infidelity Teach appropriate communication imagery during periods of pain, frustration, or failure. They were also taught to seriously reinforce forgiveness that prevents inappropriate behaviors in married life by refraining from being harsh with their spouse and exploring undesirable and unconscious aspects of the individual, and by responding positively and rebuilding trust. Provide more forgiveness for each other, as these factors increase forgiveness in women affected by marital infidelity.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that communication imagery

training (imago therapy) helps couples to acquire skills to heal past wounds and separate marital relationships from their past by understanding their unconscious processes.

Acknowledgment

None.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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