

**Emotion focused training for  
emotion coaching – the intervention  
decreasing the level of self-criticism**

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# Self-criticism – what?

- Self-criticism is a constant and harsh self-scrutiny and evaluation and feelings of unworthiness, inferiority, failure, and guilt (Blatt & Homann, 1992)

# Self-criticism – why?

- Research suggests that high levels of self-criticism plays a central role in various kinds of psychopathology (Shahar et al., 2012) e.g. anxiety, depression, addictions, schizophrenia...
- Self-criticism has serious negative consequences within nonclinical populations (e.g. Whelton & Henkleman, 2002) such as procrastination, interpersonal problems...

# Self-criticism – how?

- According to Gilbert and Irons (2004), self-criticism is an essential focus for intervention and can be treated by learning compassion and self-compassion
- In addition, Kemeny et al. (2012) proposed that learning emotion skills can increase compassion too
- Therefore, we were interested in finding whether cultivating emotion skills can influence the level of self-criticism

# Aim

- The goal of the study was to examine the efficacy of a 12 weeks, group program EFT-EC in a student population on the level of emotion intelligence, self-compassion, self-criticism and their dimensions

# Methods - measures

- **The Forms of Self-Criticism/Reassuring Scale (FSCRS; Gilbert, Clarke, Hempel, Miles, & Irons, 2004)** - Reassured self, Inadequate self, and Hated self
- **The Self-Compassion Scale (SCS; Neff, 2003)** - Self-compassionate responding and Self-uncompassionate responding
- **The Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire Short Form (TEIQue-SF; Petrides, 2009)** - Emotionality, Sociability, Self-control, and Well-being

## Methods - participants

- 128 students of psychology study, due to written form of questionnaire and a lot of missing data only 89 entered the statistical analysis
- The final group consisted of 76 women and 13 men with a mean age of 20.95 years ( $SD = 1.73$ )

# Methods - procedure

- Pre-intervention measures
- Meeting once a week for 1.5 hours for EFT-EC intervention for 12 weeks with a psychologist in a role of facilitator
- Reflection of the meeting (expressive writing - Pennebaker, 2017)
- Daily homework's exercises sent via email
- Post-intervention measures

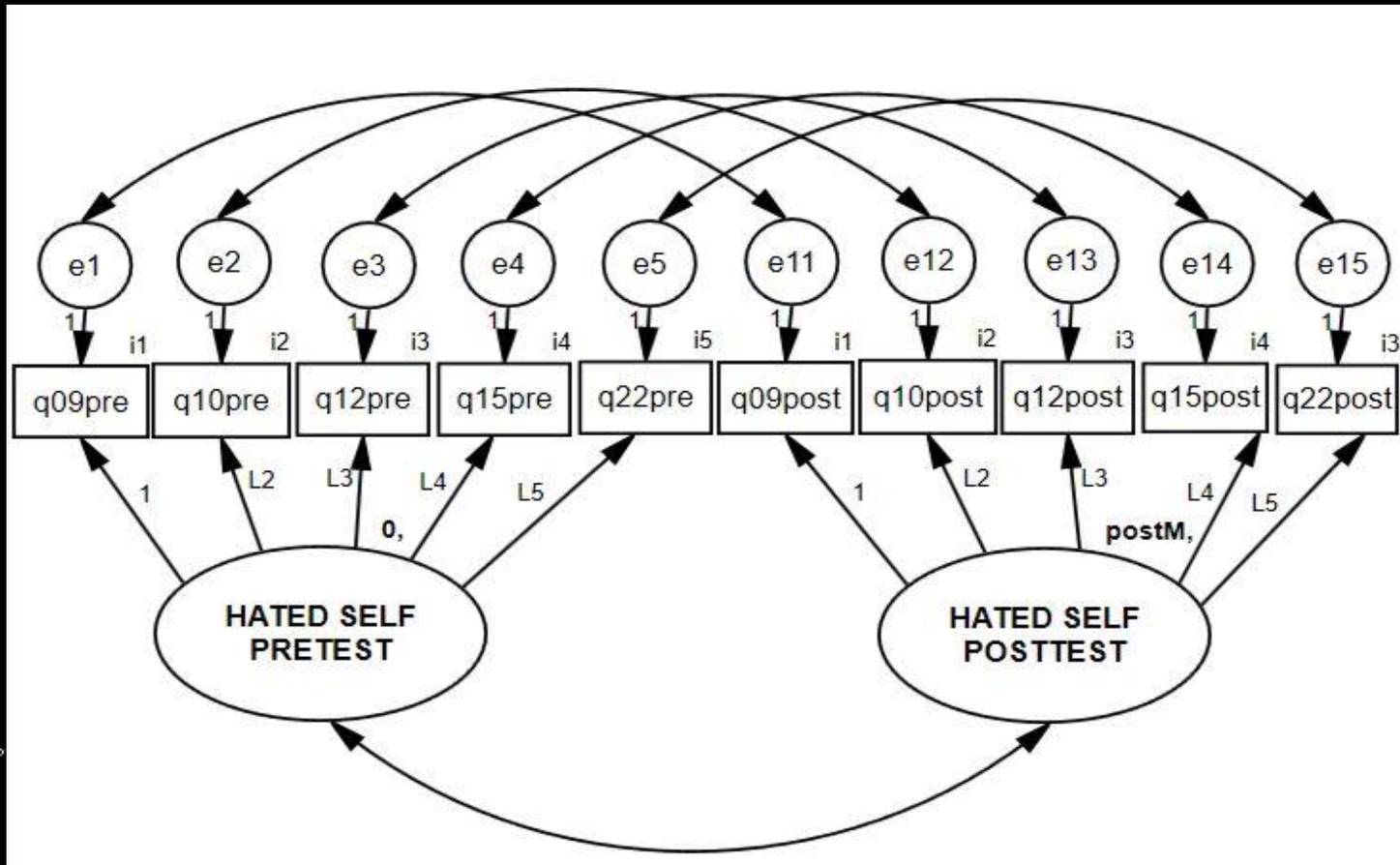
# Methods - intervention

- Based on Emotion-focused therapy (Greenberg, 2011) and its exercises (Halamová, 2013)
- Exercises - core elements of the emotion coaching from EFT perspective, the expected impact on participants and their motivation to complete them
- Every of 12 sessions - reporting about the homeworks, group exercises and debriefings, instruction to the new homework

# Data analysis

- SPSS Statistics-20, program R (Version 3. 5. 1 - R Core Team, 2018), and the package lavaan (Rosseel, 2012)
- Fit of the model with the data evaluated (maximum likelihood estimator with Yuan-Bentler correction for non-normality and robust Huber-White estimation of standard errors)
- Dynamic structural equations models (two latent constructs: pre-test and post-test, their indicators: items of subscales)

# Dynamic structural model



# Results

- At least acceptable fit with the data: Inadequate Self (FSCRS), Hated Self (FSCRS), Self-uncompassionate responding (SCS), Well-Being (TEIQue), and Sociability (TEIQue)
- Inadequate Self, Hated Self, Self-uncompassionate responding decreased significantly after the intervention, and scores for Self-control increased significantly. Scores for Sociability increased but not significantly

# Discussion

- TEIQue-SF measures trait emotional intelligence, it is promising result that the intervention lasting 12 sessions can change the trait Self-control
- According to Petrides (2009), people who score higher at self-control can control their impulses and regulate their stress without being repressive or excessively expressive

# Discussion

- Learning adaptive emotion skills may provide control over undesired emotions that could be otherwise hard to control (Berking, Ebert, Cuijpers, & Hofmann, 2013) and so higher self-control and consequently lower self-criticism
- Our findings support previous research (Gilbert & Procter, 2006) that self-critical individuals benefit from learning emotion skills.

# Discussion

- Self-critical people have difficulties with feeling safe with own emotions because they are overly sensitive to threat (Gilbert & Procter, 2006), more prone to stress and less emotionally regulated. That's why learning emotion skills lower self-criticism
- It would be interesting to explore whether EFT-EC also influence the level of stress and add some objective criteria of success for example improving grades at the university or physiological measurements e.g. HRV.

# Discussion

- The EFT-EC was more effective for decreasing Inadequate self than Hated self
- Hated self is more pathological self-criticism and harder to change (Shahar et al., 2012) because it is connected to hatred over self and it goes along with desire to hurt self (Gilbert et al., 2004)

# Discussion

- EFT-EC decreased self-criticism without increasing self-compassion. There are certainly other ways of decreasing self-criticism not only self-compassion
- Based on the previous research on effectiveness of various interventions, whilst some interventions may reduce self-criticism, they may not improve self-compassion or vice versa (Halamová, 2018)
- Theory self-compassion and self-criticism do not form a dichotomous construct

# Discussion

- As the intervention EFT-EC did not impact self-compassion, it could be meaningful to add at least one session dedicated to cultivation of self-compassion directly
- Such improvement of the intervention might influence not only the level of self-compassion but also multiply the impact on self-criticism as suggested by Gilbert and Irons (2004), who propose that self-criticism can be treated by learning compassion and self-compassion

# Limitation

- No control group
- More women than men in our sample
- Students simultaneously participated in several different courses at the university, however none of them was experiential so we assume that that they did not much influenced the results

# Conclusion

- Emotion focused training for emotion coaching aimed to cultivate emotions decreased self-criticism and self-uncompassionate responding
- These results are promising and posit that interventions aiming at emotions can be delivered with impact on self-criticism for student population

**Thank you for your attention**