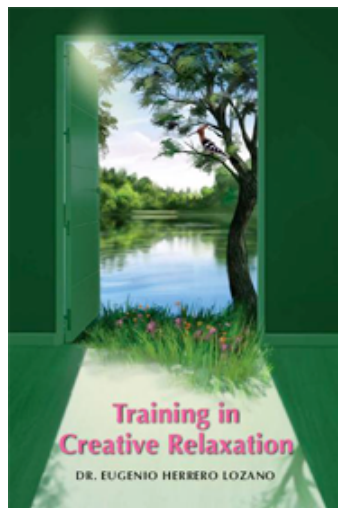


Training in Creative Relaxation G.E.R.C.H.E Research

A summary of the results of the Grupos de Entrenamiento en Relajacion Creativa y Habilidades Emocionales (G.E.R.C.H.E) research carried out by Dr Julio Herrero and Dr. Rachel Martin in Madrid –Spain, September 2007.



Translated from Spanish by Michael
Runge.

TRAINING IN CREATIVE RELAXATION: G.E.R.C.H.E RESEARCH

Background to the study

The following study is an extract from a wider 12 year research report, first published on 20th September 2007 in Spain, to assess the effectiveness of the **G.E.R.C.H.E Programme** that used techniques designed to alleviate stress, anxiety and depression in the workplace. The joint authors of the research, Dr. Julio Herrero and Dr Rachel Martin worked together in the health department of Madrid City Council and they first began the research in 1994. Dr. Herrero is a psychiatrist and the director of the programme; Dr Martin is a medical doctor and psychotherapist. The G.E.R.C.H.E programme focused on Creative Relaxation and training in Emotional Skills. Whilst the whole research report looked at the effectiveness of both parts of the training, in this document we have extracted the results for the Creative Relaxation element of the research report, which was a discreet unit of work which the researchers undertook.

Creative Relaxation Heritage

The G.E.R.C.H.E programme is based fundamentally on the Intervention Model developed by the brothers Dr Eugenio and Dr Julio Herrero Lozano over a period of more than 30 years' professional experience, and which is condensed into the Training in Creative Relaxation method, and training in Emotional Skills. Included in this model are elements of Shultz's relaxation method; Benson's work; Beck's cognitive theory; Ellis' Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy; basic components of N.L.P (Neuro-linguistic Programming) designed for learning and change and Gendling's Focusing techniques. All combined with the authors' personal theoretical and therapeutic contributions.

Training in Creative Relaxation

Training in Creative Relaxation has shown itself to be an excellent tool for coping with tensions. It teaches individuals how to achieve a relaxed state and, in that state, the best way to gain access to their inner creative potential in order to interact with the world in a more healthy and effective way. The authors had many years of experience in promoting healthy living and treating mental illness which showed them the benefit of offering this training as a foundation before introducing other techniques.

The First Project 1995-2006

Between the period of 1995 and 2006, 1,297 people who experienced the training in Creative Relaxation were assessed for levels of anxiety and depression before, and after, the training using recognised psychological tests. The participants of these groups were derived from Local Government employees as well as members of the general public who attended the Council's Health Programmes. See Table 1 below:

Table 1: Training groups held from 1995 to January 2006

Groups held and evaluated In total	55 groups
Total number of participants	1,297 people
Average number of Participants per group	25 people
Background origin of the Participants.	Local government employees; Menopause programme; Diabetes programme; AIDS and STD prevention programme; the general population.
Distribution by gender	Women=78%; Men=22%
Average age	Women=42.6 years; Men=40 years.

The Second Project 2006-2007

In 2006 Dr. Herrero and Dr. Martin launched another project using the Creative Relaxation Technique involving 153 participants; officers from the Madrid Metropolitan Police Force as well as employees of The Madrid Council. The aim was to evaluate the effectiveness of the Creative Relaxation technique. Dr. Herrero and Dr. Martin assessed anxiety and depression levels in the 153 participants before and after the course of Creative Relaxation.

Methodology

The participants were assessed for levels of *ANXIETY*, both in the variable “*state*” and the variable “*trait*” using the STAI questionnaire (State – Trait Anxiety Inventory), both on the first day of the course (PRE) and when the same course finished (POST). ‘State’ anxiety is characterised as being in the present moment (state); ‘trait’ anxiety is sustained over time and is part of the personality of an individual’s trait. Participants were assessed at the same time for *DEPRESSION* levels (Dp) using the BDI questionnaire (Beck’s Depression Inventory). Both these questionnaires are designed for just such a purpose and widely confirmed as being reliable indicators.

Combined findings from groups between First Project 1995-2006 and Second Project 2006-2007

The results assessed from the Second Project 2006-2007 were similar to those obtained in the First Project 1995-2006, since the therapeutic tools have remained the same over that time in the **G.E.R.C.H.E. Programme**. The data from the 153 participants in the 2006 Project was combined with the data collected from all previous 1,297 participants to give a total sample of **1,450** as the number of Local Authority Employees who have been trained in Creative Relaxation over that period.

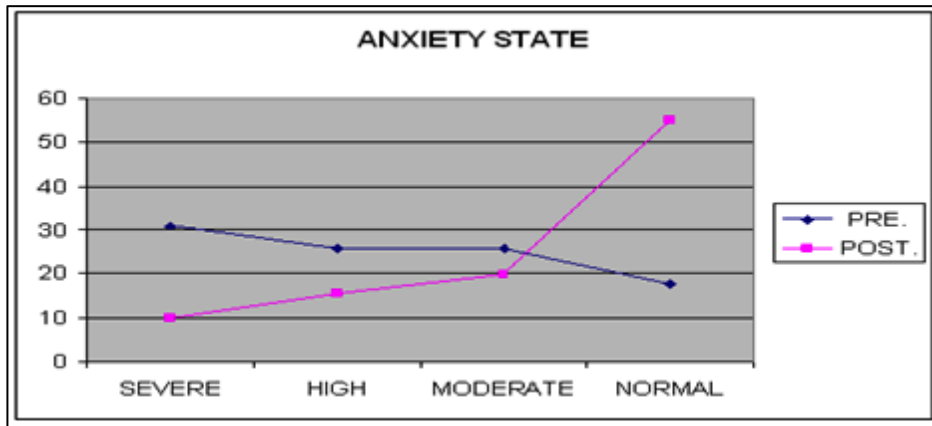
Results – State Anxiety

On average State Anxiety improved from a level of 30 (high) to levels of 18 (moderate). The scale was split into different categories of anxiety; Severe, High, Moderate, Normal and the proportions of the sample in each category was analysed. Before the course 31% of the sample was in the Severe anxiety category; after the course this had dropped to 10% which represents a *reduction* of **68%** in levels of Severe anxiety. There was a similar result for High anxiety (a fall of **39%**) and for Moderate anxiety (a fall of **23%**). The proportion of the sample in the Normal category rose by **212%**. (See Table 1 and Graphic 1)

Table 1: State Anxiety before and after the course.

	ANXIETY	SEVERE	HIGH	MODERATE	NORMAL
		%	%	%	%
STATE	PRE	31.1	25.7	25.7	17.6
	POST	9.8	15.6	19.7	54.9
	% DIFFERENCE	(21.3)	(10.1)	(6.0)	37.3
	% VARIATION	(68)	(39)	(23)	212

Graphic 1: State Anxiety before and after courses



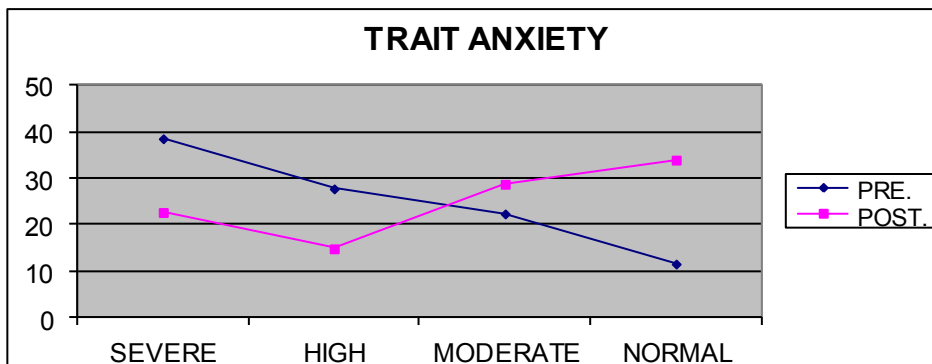
Results – Trait Anxiety

Trait Anxiety, which is anxiety sustained throughout the time span of the group, was expected to show significantly smaller differences between pre- and post-course results. However, even here the results showed that average Trait Anxiety levels fell from 30 to 21. Looking at the different categories showed that before the course 39% of the sample was in the Severe anxiety category; after the course this had dropped to 23% which represents a *reduction* of **41%** in levels of Severe anxiety. There was a similar result for High anxiety (a fall of **46%**). The proportion of the sample in Moderate anxiety rose by 29% and the proportion of the sample in the Normal category rose by **195%**. (See Table 2 and Graphic 2)

Table 2: Trait Anxiety before and after the course

	ANXIETY	SEVERE %	HIGH %	MODERATE %	NORMAL %
TRAIT	PRE	38.5	27.7	22.3	11.5
	POST	22.6	14.8	28.7	33.9
	% DIFFERENCE	(15.9)	(12.9)	6.4	22.4
	% VARIATION	(41)	(47)	29	195

Graphic 2: Anxiety trait before and after the course



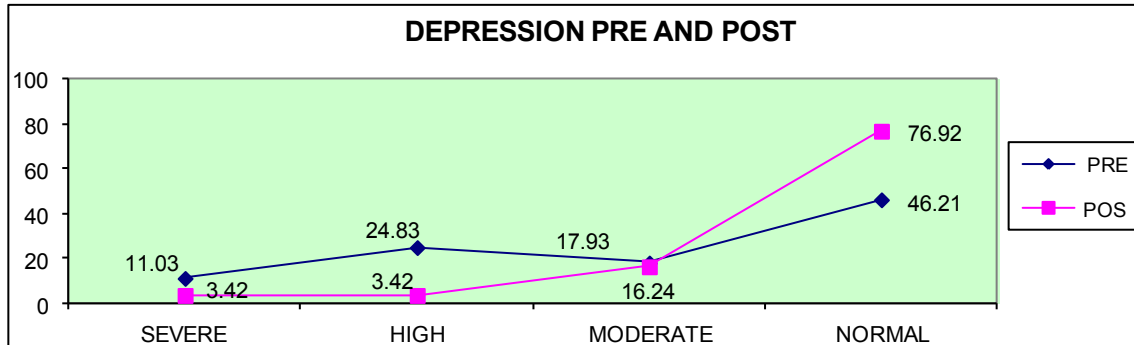
Results – Depression

Depression was analysed by looking at changes in depressed moods over the six weeks of the Course. We showed that the pre-course average initial level of affectation was indicated as Moderate (13 on the scale) and this compared to a post-course average of 6.5 which is within the parameters of normality. Examining the data in the different categories reveals significant falls in the number of cases in the Severe and High categories. There was a **69% decrease** in Severe cases, an **83% decrease** of cases affected at a High level, and a decrease of **2%** in slightly affected case. The number in the Normal category rose by **66%**. (See table 3 and graphic 3).

Table 5: Depression before and after the course

DEPRESSION	SEVERE %	HIGH %	MODERATE %	NORMAL %
PRE	11.0	24.8	17.9	46.2
POST	3.4	3.4	16.2	76.9
% DIFFERENCE	(7.6)	(20.6)	(1.7)	30.7
% VARIATION	(69)	(83)	(9)	66

Graphic 8: Depression before and after course.



Conclusion

The G.E.R.C.H.E programme offers training in Emotional Skills as well as Creative Relaxation but this study as summarised here deals only with the effectiveness of the Creative Relaxation Training element. The results show that this technique lowers severe anxiety by 68% and severe depression by 69%. It helps to guard against the damaging consequences of stress-related conditions. These reductions may benefit both mental and physical health and they may produce benefits in the workplace, the family or socially.

The authors conclude that there are number of factors which make this programme of value as a preventative measure in the workplace and in the field of Mental Health and Psychosomatic Health. They are as follows:

- The first is *low cost* of the G.E.R.C.H.E method as one or two trained professionals can train a large number of people. The only material resources needed are a suitable room, a blackboard and some photocopied sheets of paper.
- The second is the *short amount of time* that Creative Relaxation takes; ten hours spread over five weekly sessions of two hours each.
- Next is the *innovative and unique* structure of the programme which is easy to present.
- Finally the programme is *well received* by the participants who benefit greatly.