

ABSTRACT

The present study examined the effect of six-minutes' writing about compassion on mental well-being. 202 participants were recruited and randomly assigned into three groups – compassion writing condition, self-compassion writing condition and the control. Each participant was required to complete five days of writing. Their mental well-being, compassion, self-compassion, self-criticism, and hostility were measured at pretest and posttest assessments, one-month and three-month follow-ups. A total of 139 participants completed all the measures. Multivariate analysis showed a significant time effect on social well-being at posttest for all experimental conditions, indicating that participants have their social well-being improved after the writing exercise regardless of the conditions they were assigned to. Self-compassion significantly improved at posttest for the self-compassion writing condition, but not for the compassion writing condition and the control. Participants high in self-criticism were more likely to benefit from the self-compassion writing exercise. There was no significant change of compassion to others at posttest for the compassion writing condition and for control, but there was a significant drop of compassion to others for the self-compassion writing condition. The compassion writing exercise seems not to be effective in improving compassion, regardless of the individuals' level of hostility.