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The physiological and emotional effects of touch: Assessing a hand-massage intervention with high self-critics

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Abstract

Research demonstrates that highly self-critical individuals can respond negatively to the initial introduction of a range of therapeutic interventions. Yet touch as a form of therapeutic intervention in self-critical individuals has received limited prior investigation, despite documentation of its beneficial effects for well-being. Using the Forms of Self-Criticism/Self-Reassuring Scale, 15 high- and 14 low- self-critical individuals (from a sample of 139 females) were recruited to assess how self-criticism impacts upon a single instance of focused touch. All participants took part in a hand massage- and haptic control-intervention. Salivary cortisol and alpha amylase, as well as questionnaire measures of emotional responding were taken before and after the interventions. Following hand massage, analyses revealed cortisol decreased significantly across *all* participants; and that

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