
Therapeutic application of affective touch: the psychoactive massage

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Abstract

Psychoactive massage (PAM GMK), developed by body therapist Gabriele Mariell Kiebgis relies on the demonstrated effects of affective touch in addition to the already widely accepted activation of oxytocinergic neurons (Uvnäs Moberg, 2003) and differs profoundly from classical massage techniques. Conditions that prioritise affective touch are incorporated in PAM GMK: gentle, caring strokes of body areas with CT fibres (Olausson, 2016; Schirmer & McGlone, 2022), body temperature of 34°C (Ackerley, 2018), clarity of intention during massage (Sailer et al, 2020) and the need for repetition (Schleip, 2012). As a massage technique, PAM GMK is detailed and clearly structured and involves the whole body with a focus on the coherence and evenness of all body parts (Kiebgis, 2023). Several meta-analysis studies (Baumgart et al, 2011; Moyer et al., 2014; Hou et al., 2014) confirm positive effects of massage therapy for people with depression (PmD). An experimental study by Arnold et al (2020) indicates that psychoactive massage by PmD leads to significant clinical improvements in internal unrest, unpleasant physical body sensations and feelings of hopelessness (Müller-Oerlinghausen & Eggart, 2020). PAM GMK works therapeutically because of the repetitiveness of the sessions to address the characteristic features of anhedonia and vital inhibition in PmD, restoring the disrupted interoceptive network, counts on insular processing and its modulatory effect on the amygdala. All this leads to a pleasant experience and a growing higher-quality body experience (Kiebgis & Müller-Oerlinghausen, 2018).

Keywords: psychoactive massage, depression, affective touch

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