TRAINING OF EMOTIONAL CREATIVITY AND DEVELOPMENT OF ADAPTIVE PERSONAL QUALITIES

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Abstract

The article describes the results of educational experiment with the use of psychological training of emotional creativity. The objectives of the training were the development of rapid and effective management of emotional states, flexibility and variability in the expression of feelings, finding new meanings of difficult life situations and transformation of stereotypical, destructive emotions into more constructive ones. The educational experiment was based on the notion of emotional creativity, which was introduced by J.R. Averill, as well as the author's understanding of this phenomenon, as the ability of variable and spontaneous generation of new meanings arising from life experiences and new ways of emotional response. To assess the effectiveness of psychological training and its impact on the adaptive personal properties we used J.R. Averill's emotional creativity questionnaire, R.Lazarus and S.Folkman's method called "Coping behavior strategies", and Freiburg Personality Inventory (FPI), as well as the emotional creativity test, which was developed by the author of the present article. The proposed experimental hypothesis regarding the influence of emotional creativity on the optimization of personal qualities', that provide for social and psychological adaptation, was confirmed.

Key words: emotional creativity, adaptive personal qualities, coping strategies, psychological training, emotional creativity test.

Successful management of emotions requires wide variability of reactions and arbitrariness of choice of an emotional response in highly significant frustrating situations. Variability and randomness of reaction can be achieved through generation

of new ideas regarding emotional phenomena, which is provided by such personal property as emotional creativity [1]. The term “emotional creativity” was introduced by J.R. Averill within the framework of social-constructivist theory, which viewed emotions as complex constructs or emotional syndromes, which included socially conditioned instructions for experiencing, expressing and understanding emotions [2].

According to J.R. Averill's views, emotional creativity has a complex structure consisting of such components as willingness to exercise emotional creativity, which presupposes good knowledge about emotions based on the previous experience, where special importance is given to emotional life; novelty of emotions - the ability to experience the unusual, indescribable emotions; effectiveness - the ability to generate emotions that have a certain social value, and authenticity - the ability to produce emotional syndromes, reflecting the unique personality of their creator [3]. The ability to modify and improve emotional syndromes due to one's own creative activity has different degrees of manifestation in different people.

Problem field of emotional creativity is relatively new and heuristic in terms of solving the problems regarding studying the possibilities of developing emotional management skills to improve communicative competence, resilience [4; 5], self-effectiveness and successfulness of carrying out various activities [3; 6; 7]. In our opinion, emotional creativity is a flexible, creative control of one's emotions, which presupposes flexible transformation of usual, stereotypical, "leading into a deadlock" emotions, into the new emotions, which help to find constructive meanings of life events that occur.

Based on the already existing understanding and the author's concept of the phenomenon of emotional creativity as an ability of variable and spontaneous generation of new meanings arising from life experiences and new ways of emotional response, we suggested that the development of this ability can serve to increase behavior flexibility and optimize personal properties, which are responsible for social and psychological adaptation.

To test the hypothesis that was put forward, the author of the article together with K.I. Novoselova conducted an educational experiment with the use of training of emotional creativity, which had the tasks of development of a rapid and effective management of emotional states, flexibility and variability in the expression of feelings, finding new meanings of difficult life situations and transformation of stereotypical, destructive emotions into more constructive ones.

We used the following psychological and diagnostic tools: J.R. Averill's emotional creativity questionnaire [8], “Coping behavior strategies” method (an adaptation of R.Lazarus and S.Folkman's questionnaire by V.M. Bekhterev's Institute) [9] , Freiburg Personality Inventory (FPI) (adapted by A.A. Krylov and T.I. Ronginsky) [10], allowing to diagnose the conditions and qualities of a personality that are of paramount importance for the process of social adaptation and regulation of behavior; we also used the diagnostic test of emotional creativity, which was developed by the author. We used eight contour drawings from G. Murray's Apperception Test (L.N. Sobchik's modification) [11] as stimulus material for the method of diagnostics of emotional creativity that we developed. The drawings show 2, sometimes 3 people; each character is shown in a conditional manner, neither sex nor age, nor his social status can be clear from the picture. At the same time, their postures, expression of gestures, peculiarities of figures' location give evidence of the fact that each of the images depicts a situation, which is likely to be a conflict one, and at least two characters are involved in complex interpersonal relations. Images make us have different assumptions about the situation, the role of the "heroes" in the given circumstances, their relationships and intentions. The major advantage of this technique is the non-verbal character of the given material, which expands the number of choice degrees for the testee and provokes the disclosure of the testee's deep emotional experiences. Having defined emotional creativity as an ability providing flexibility of emotional response in a situation of uncertainty, conflict, or frustration, we asked the following questions based on the pictures: 1. Who are these people?; 2. What is happening at the moment?; 3. Imagine and list all possible

feelings, which one (or several) characters in the picture may experience; 4. Can the characters' feelings change very soon? What can they feel later? The wider and more diverse the range of emotional states, which the testees name, is, the more developed their ability to manage emotions creatively is.

The study involved 30 people aged 18 to 35 years. The experimental and control group consisted of 15 people. The forming (educational) experiment using emotional creativity training was held for two and a half months. Diagnostics was carried out three times: before the experiment, immediately after the end of the experiment, and in six months' time after the end of the experiment.

Analysis of the results of the forming experiment showed that the positive dynamics in the development of emotional creativity in the experimental group (Table 1.), which was established with questionnaire (t_{emp} = 3,2; $p \leq 0,05$) and testing (t_{emp} = 4.6; $p \leq 0,001$) methods.

Table 1.

Change of the level of emotional creativity index after the experiment

Tool for measuring emotional creativity	Experimental group (mean values)			Control group (mean values)		
	Before the experiment	After the experiment	t_{emp}	Before the experiment	After the experiment	t_{emp}
J.R. Averill's questionnaire	110	122,5	3,2	105,2	104,9	0,4
S.V. Frolova's test	11,3	17,3	4,6	12,6	12,5	0,2

As a result of statistical analysis of the experimental and control groups we revealed the interconnection between J.R. Averill's emotional creativity questionnaire and S.V. Frolova's method for diagnosing emotional creativity ($r = 0,56$; $p \leq 0,01$).

In the course of the emotional creativity training, we discovered changes in the use of coping strategies in difficult situations. In 92% of the participants of the forming experiment we observed the increase in the choice of strategy for taking

responsibility (t_{emp} = 4,9; p≤0,001), 85% of the participants demonstrated strengthening of the strategy of positive re-evaluation (t_{emp} = 2,8; p≤0,05); 77% of the participants demonstrated reduction in the frequency of use of problem avoidance strategies (t_{emp} = 2,6; p≤0,05) and the increase in the frequency of choice of confrontation strategy in the problematic situation (t_{emp} = 2,6; p≤0,05). These changes, occurring in the course of training, show that development of emotional creativity enhances the desire to understand the connection between one's own actions and their consequences, and willingness to analyze one's behavior; it promotes the formation of the ability to perceive the problem as a stimulus for personal growth, and thus to overcome negative experiences; it increases one's ability to resist challenges, to show energy and enterprise in pursuit of one's own interests; it enriches behavioral activity with more constructive ways of overcoming difficulties.

In order to test the hypothesis about participation of emotional creativity in shaping the adaptive system of behavior self-regulation, we examined the effect of our emotional creativity training's influence on the states and personality traits, which are of paramount importance for the process of social adaptation and regulation of behavior. Comparative analysis of personal states and qualities before and after the training showed significant changes in the experimental group representatives regarding the parameters of shyness, sociability, spontaneous aggressiveness, emotional lability, neuroticism (Table. 2). In the control group, we have not found any significant changes in these parameters.

Table 2.

Mean values based on FPI before and after the experiment

Personal state/quality	Experimental group			Control group		
	Before the experiment	After the experiment	t_{emp}	Before the experiment	After the experiment	t_{emp}
Shyness	5,3	4	2,9	3,3	3,1	0,5
Sociability	7	8,5	3,6	7	7,1	0,2
Balance	4,3	6,3	4,3	4,7	4,9	0,5
Spontaneous aggressiveness	5,5	4,5	2,4	4,5	4,1	1,3
Emotional lability	7,6	5,6	2,8	6,7	6,3	1,3
Irritability	6,1	5	4,4	6,4	6,3	0,2

The obtained results allow us to conclude that the hypothesis that has been put forward, regarding the influence of emotional creativity on optimization of personal qualities, which provide for social and psychological adaptation, has been confirmed. Flexible and creative management of emotions allows coping with anxiety and stiffness and getting away from stress reactions to ordinary life situations. Rapid transformation of negative and stereotypically arising emotions into more constructive ones serves for behavior stabilization and reduces the probability of spontaneous aggression. With the development of emotional creativity, optimism, self-confidence, and resistance to the effects of stress factors increase. Developing the ability to quickly convert stereotypically arising negative emotions is a prerequisite to good anger management and serves to prevent mental exhaustion, which leads to the emergence of asthenoneurotic syndrome.

To check the stability of emotional creativity training effect, in six months's time after its completion, we carried out diagnostics of the level of emotional

creativity of the participants. Comparative analysis of diagnostic results with the use of a J.R. Averill's questionnaire immediately after the experiment and in six months' time revealed a sufficiently high sustained effect of the emotional creativity training.

Comparative analysis of the diagnostics, based on S.V. Frolova's method, which was performed immediately after the experiment and in six months' time identified a smooth increase in the index of the emotional creativity level (t_{emp} = 2,4; $p \leq 0,05$), which makes it possible to talk about the possibility of cumulative training effect over time. The supporting data for the two emotional creativity techniques confirm the effectiveness of the training, which is manifested both immediately upon its completion, and after quite a long time. The ascending effect, which is diagnosed using a test method, may indicate its possibly greater sensitivity to the dynamics and differentiation in manifestation of emotional creativity in comparison with the subjective questionnaire method.

Based on the results of statistical and mathematical analysis, we can conclude that emotional creativity can act as a psychological mechanism for increasing the adaptation potential of an individual through participation in the formation of an effective system of behavior self-regulation.

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