

People who typically avoid seeking help may be open to psychotherapy if and when they believe they are ready to begin changing aspects of their lives

Avoidant, but Ready to Change? Facilitating Help-Seeking for Avoidant Help-Seekers

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INTRO

- Help-seeking styles and readiness to change may influence the beliefs that individuals hold regarding mental health treatment
- Help-seeking styles include dependent help-seeking, autonomous help-seeking, and avoidant help-seeking (Komissarouk, Harpaz, & Nadler, 2017).
- Readiness to change refers to one's willingness to consider trying a new approach to one's problems and relates to perceived self-efficacy in the domain where change is being considered (Prochaska, 2009; Zimmerman & Olsen, 2009).
- Predicted that help-seeking styles and readiness to change would predict help-seeking attitudes and that readiness to change would buffer the negative effect of an avoidant help-seeking style.

METHODS

1. Distressed university students completed online assessments
 - avoidant, autonomous, and dependent help-seeking styles
 - readiness to change
 - help-seeking attitudes
2. $N = 842$; Age, $M = 19.54$, $SD = 2.19$;

RESULTS

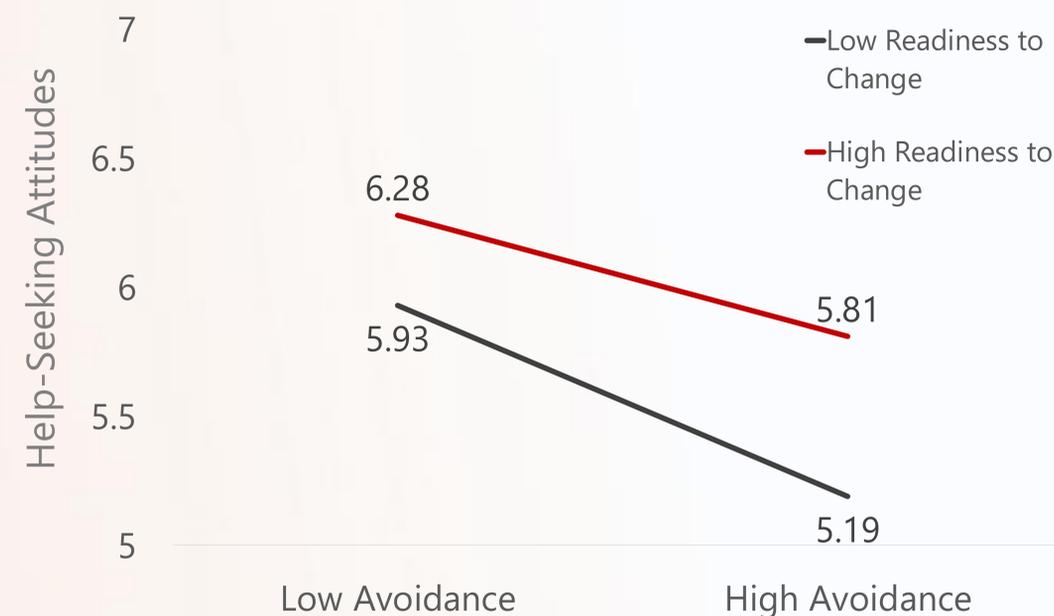
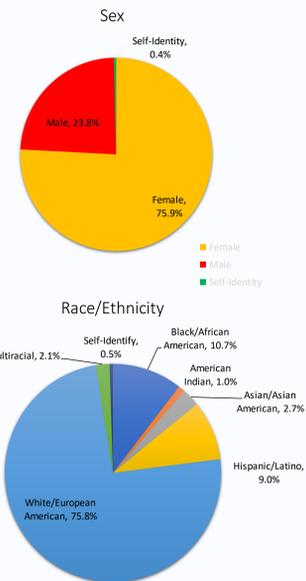


Figure 1. Interaction between avoidant help-seeking style and readiness to change on help-seeking attitudes. Low and high levels are predicted mean values corresponding ± 1 SD from the mean.

DISCUSSION

- Autonomous help-seekers tend to view seeking professional help positively, while avoidant help-seekers view it negatively.
- Avoidant help-seekers—who typically view help-seeking negatively—may view help-seeking more positively if they are more ready to change.
- An important aspect of encouraging appropriate help-seeking may be to help individuals reflect on their important values and goals, and consider behaviors that are in misalignment (Miller & Rollnick, 2012).



Measures

- **Help-Seeking Styles.** The 14-item Help Seeking Scale assessed autonomous, dependent, and avoidant help-seeking styles (Komissarouk, Harpaz, & Nadler, 2017). Participants rate items from -3 = strongly disagree to 3 = strongly agree, with sample items for autonomous help-seeking, "I tend to ask for advice from other people regarding the problems I deal with if it helps me cope better," $\alpha = .93$.
- **Readiness to Change.** Participants were asked to indicate how prepared they were to change how they approach both (a) their mental health, and (b) their life in general, from *not prepared to change/no need to change* = 0 to *already changing* = 100 (LaBrie et al., 2005), $\alpha = .76$.
- **Help-Seeking Attitudes.** The 9-item Mental Help Seeking Attitudes Scale assessed attitudes toward mental health help seeking (Hammer, Parent, & Spiker, 2018). Participants denote their opinion for seeking help from a mental health profession by rating a 1-7 differential scale between opposite words such as desirable vs. undesirable or useless vs. useful, $\alpha = .92$.
- **Psychological Distress.** The 6-item Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K6) assessed psychological distress (Kessler et al., 2002). Participants read the sentence stem "During the past 30 days, about how often did you feel..." and rated answers, such as "nervous" and "hopeless," on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = all the time to 5 = none of the time, $\alpha = .86$.

RESULTS

- Results of Multiple Regression Analyses:
 - Distress accounted for 1% of the variance in help-seeking attitudes.
 - Including autonomous ($\beta = 0.28, p < .001$), dependent ($\beta = 0.01, p = .702$), and avoidant ($\beta = -0.15, p < .001$) help-seeking styles increased the amount of variance explained by 14% ($R^2 = 0.16$).
 - Including readiness to change ($\beta = 0.17, p < .001$) increased the amount of variance explained by 2% ($R^2 = 0.18$), all $ps < .001$.
- A PROCESS (Hayes, 2017) moderation analysis indicated a significant interaction between avoidant help-seeking and readiness to change ($p = .045$), see Figure 1.
 - Avoidant help-seeking's negative association with positive help-seeking attitudes was weaker when readiness to change was high.

