

School-Based Prevention of Depressive Symptoms: A Randomized Controlled Study of the Effectiveness and Specificity of the Penn Resiliency Program

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The authors investigated the effectiveness and specificity of the Penn Resiliency Program (PRP; J. E. Gillham, L. H. Jaycox, K. J. Reivich, M. E. P. Seligman, & T. Silver, 1990), a cognitive-behavioral depression prevention program. Children ($N = 697$) from 3 middle schools were randomly assigned to PRP, Control (CON), or the Penn Enhancement Program (PEP; K. J. Reivich, 1996; A. J. Shatte', 1997), an alternate intervention that controls for nonspecific intervention ingredients. Children's depressive symptoms were assessed through 3 years of follow-up. There was no intervention effect on average levels of depressive symptoms in the full sample. Findings varied by school. In 2 schools, PRP significantly reduced depressive symptoms across the follow-up relative to both CON and PEP. In the 3rd school, PRP did not prevent depressive symptoms. The authors discuss the findings in relation to previous research on PRP and the dissemination of prevention programs.