The mistargeted communication technique: Influencing help seeking among people with depression.

Jason T. Siegel, Brianna A. Lienemann & Cara N. Tan
Mistargeted Communication

• Motivated by an abortion ad.

• Walster and Festinger (1962)
  • “It is widely believed that a communication, if inadvertently overheard, is more likely to be effective in changing the opinion of the listener than if it had been deliberately addressed to him” (p. 395).

• “Do you know someone who fights depression?” (Siegel, Lienemann, & Tan, in press)
Mistargeted Communication

- Study 1
  - Print PSA
  - General Help Seeking Intentions

- Study 2
  - Video PSA
  - Help Seeking Intentions (web site)
  - Attitudes Toward Help Seeking (semantic differential)
  - Help Seeking Outcomes Expectations
Mistargeted Communication (Study 1)

- 319 participants
  - Seven were removed due to being multivariate outliers.
- Mean age = 31.99 years ($SD = 10.84$, Range = 18-66)
- Ethnic/Racial breakdown
  - White/Caucasian (80.4%)
  - Black/African American (5.8%)
  - Asian or Pacific Islander (5.8%)
  - Multi-Racial (2.9%)
  - Hispanic (3.2%)
  - Native American or Alaska Native (0.3%)
Mistargeted Communication
(Study 1)

• Measures

• Beck Depression Inventory–II (BDI-II; Beck, Steer, & Brown, 1996).

  (a) “I have not lost interest in other people or activities” (score of 0),
  (b) “I am less interested in other people or things than before” (score of 1),
  (c) “I have lost most of my interest in other people or things” (score of 2), and
  (d) “It’s hard to get interested in anything” (score of 3).
Mistargeted Communication (Study 1)

- Measures
  - General Help Seeking Questionnaire (GHSQ; Wilson, Deane, Ciarrochi, & Rickwood, 2005).
  - If you were depressed, how likely is it that you would seek help from the following people?
    - Friend
    - Romantic Partner
    - Family
    - Mental Health Professional
**Direct Depression PSA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Message</th>
<th>Mistargeted Depression PSA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are you distressed? Feeling hopeless? Worthless?</td>
<td>Do you know someone who is feeling distressed? Feeling hopeless? Worthless?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You might be depressed. It is not your fault that you are depressed.</td>
<td>They might be depression. It is not their fault they are depressed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are not weak. You did nothing wrong.</td>
<td>They are not weak. They did nothing wrong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You have an illness—an illness that can be overcome!</td>
<td>They have an illness—an illness that can be overcome!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You will not be depressed forever, but you must take the first steps toward recovery: talking to someone.</td>
<td>They will not be depressed forever, but they must take the first steps toward recovery: talking to someone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking help is the first step.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The longer you wait the more difficult it gets.</td>
<td>The longer they wait, the more difficult it gets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please talk to family, friends, a professional. Talk to us.</td>
<td>Please ask them to talk to family, friends, a professional. Ask them to talk to us.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Alliance for Depression Awareness.</td>
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<td>1-800-273-Talk</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show your strength by asking for help.</td>
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Results (Study 1)
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Mistargeted Communication (Study 1)

• Discussion
Mistargeted Communication
(Study 2)

- Measures

- Beck Depression Inventory–II (BDI-II; Beck, Steer, & Brown, 1996).
  (a) “I have not lost interest in other people or activities” (score of 0),
  (b) “I am less interested in other people or things than before” (score of 1),
  (c) “I have lost most of my interest in other people or things” (score of 2), and
  (d) “It’s hard to get interested in anything” (score of 3).
Mistargeted Communication (Study 2)

- Attitudes toward help seeking (semantic differential)
- Help Seeking Outcome Expectations
  - Adapted from Social Support Outcome Expectations (Siegel et al., 2012)
- General Help Seeking Questionnaire (GHSQ; Wilson, Deane, Ciarrochi, & Rickwood, 2005).
  - If you were depressed, how likely is it that you would seek help from the a web site?
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Results (Study 2)

The graph shows the relationship between Help Seeking Outcome Expectancies and BDI-II Scores across different conditions: Control, Direct Ad, and Mistargeted Ad. As BDI-II Scores increase, Help Seeking Outcome Expectancies decrease, indicating a negative correlation.
Results (Study 2)

The graph illustrates the relationship between BDI-II scores and attitudes toward seeking help across different conditions: Control, Direct Ad, and Mistargeted Ad. The graph shows a downward trend in attitudes toward seeking help as BDI-II scores increase, with the Mistargeted Ad condition demonstrating the most consistent decline.
Results (Study 2)

The graph illustrates the changes in Help Seeking Intention across different BDI-II Scores for different conditions: Control, Direct Ad, and Mistargeted Ad. The graph shows a decrease in Help Seeking Intention as BDI-II Scores increase, with the mistargeted ad condition showing a more pronounced decline compared to the control and direct ad conditions.
Mistargeted Communication (Study 2)

- Discussion
Mistargeted Communication

- Conclusions