

Evolutionary Psychology Framework as an Adjunctive Treatment for High Functioning Adults with Depression or Anxiety in a Group Therapy Setting.

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INTRODUCTION

- Evolutionary Psychology can be applied to psychotherapy by reframing negative thoughts and feeling as maladaptive coping strategies better suited for the evolutionary arena in which they were developed.
- It can be further applied to group psychotherapy by using evolutionary psychology as a lens to view group dynamics, altruism, reciprocity, and cheating.

PROPOSAL

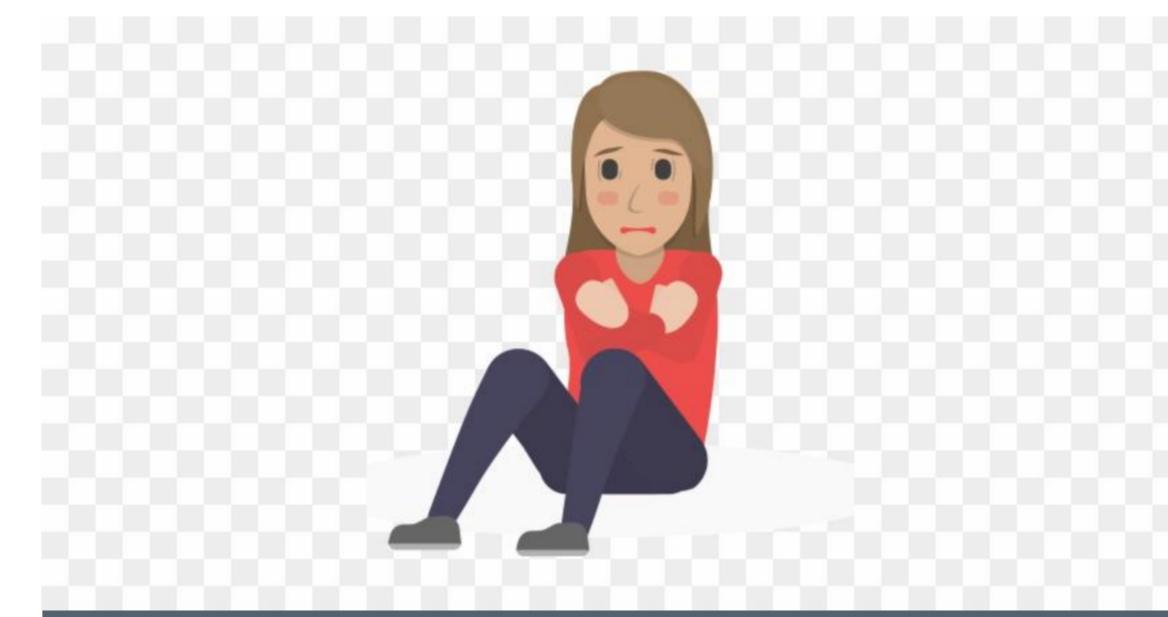
We propose a long-term interpersonal therapy group for high functioning adults between the ages of 25 and 45 who are diagnosed with a depressive disorder or social anxiety. The group would focus on exploring the tenets in evolutionary psychology, framing emotional distress in terms of its evolutionary role, and approaching group dynamics by looking at the historical development of social roles within a group.



OBJECTIVES

- 1: Participants will be able to describe how tenets of evolutionary psychology apply to manifestations of their anxiety and depressive symptoms.
- 2: Participants will be able to discuss alternative strategies to mitigate emotional dysregulation using language derived from evolutionary psychological principles with other group member in and out of formal group contexts.

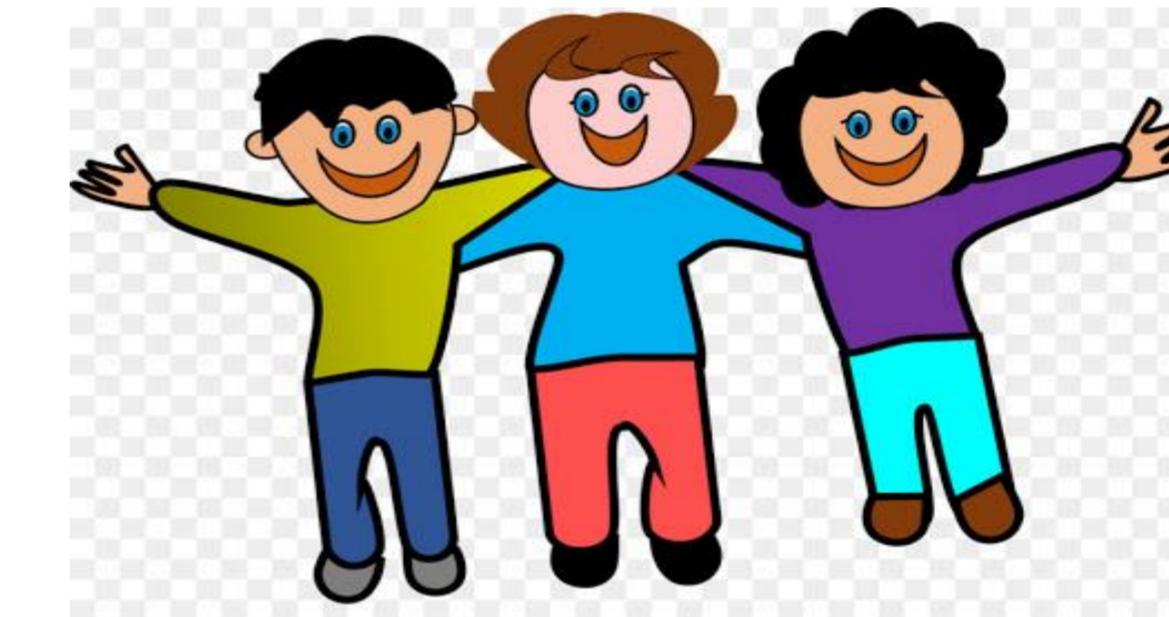
CORE TENETS OF GROUP EVOLUTIONARY PSYCHOTHERAPY



Anxiety



Depression



Reciprocal Altruism



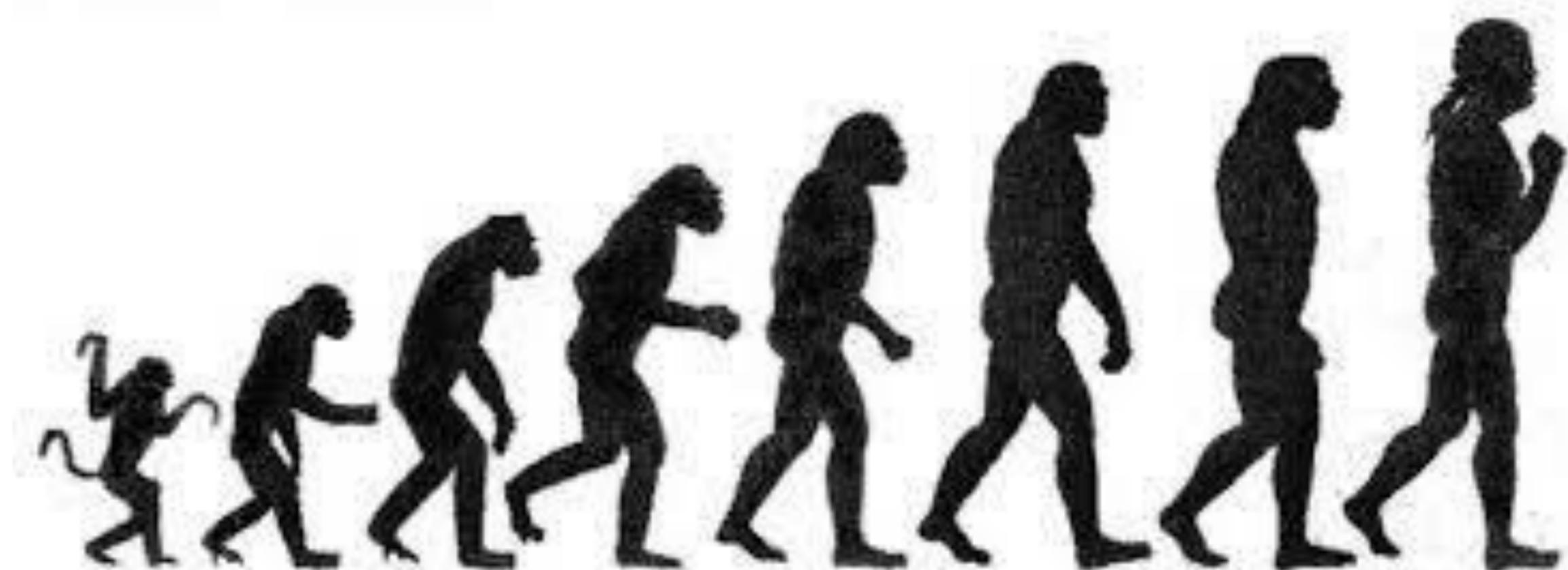
Cheating

Anxiety may have been a beneficial trait in an early hominid, who needed to be hyper-vigilant of predators, competitors, or other threats to themselves or their group.

Depression, particularly in response to rejection, isolation, or social difficulty, emphasized the importance of status within group as a survival tactic. An individual outside of the group does not receive the benefits of reciprocal altruism and other group social norms.

Behaviour whereby a group member acts in a manner that temporarily reduces their fitness while increasing another group member's fitness, with the expectation that the other organism will act in a similar manner at a later time.

Cheating occurs when a group member receives the benefits of others' altruism without contributing to the group themselves. Rule abiders who are aware of this inevitably experience mental distress.



CONCLUSION

Evolutionary psychology has shown efficacy in individual psychotherapy, and is a promising modality that can be applied to group therapy as well, particularly in its approach to group dynamics. Further research into the application of evolutionary psychology and its use in group psychotherapy therapy is needed to understand the potential of this blast-from-the-past therapeutic method.

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