



Research on BrainWise Taught to Homeless Men: Improvements in Executive Functions and Coping Self-Efficacy



Marilyn Welsh, PhD
Professor,
University of
Northern
Colorado

Marilyn Welsh, PhD, is a professor of psychological sciences at the University of Northern Colorado. An expert in executive functions and a member of the BrainWise Research Team, Marilyn received word that SAGE Open will publish our research on teaching BrainWise to homeless men. These [findings](#) provide additional evidence that the BrainWise program's 10 Wise Ways improve decision making and problem solving.

The research was conducted with homeless men living in Transitional Housing Facilities managed by a longtime private social service organization. The paper contains considerable detail, but the following is a snapshot of the study:



Study Design

A pretest/post-test control group design compared 210 men in a treatment group with 61 men who were in a control group. Both groups received the same interventions, but the treatment group also was taught BrainWise.

Measurement instruments.

1. **BRIEF-Adult.** The **B**ehavior **R**esearch **I**nventory of **E**xecutive **F**unctions (**BRIEF**) is a standardized rating scale containing 75 items. It measures inhibition, emotional control, self-monitoring,

shifting, initiation, working memory, planning/organization, task monitoring, and organization of materials.

2. **Coping-Self-Efficacy Scale (CSE).** This measure contains 13 items that assess how efficiently an individual copes with problems.
3. **BrainWise Knowledge Survey (BKS).** The BKS measure the skills BrainWise teaches.

Results

The men in the treatment group who received BrainWise exhibited significant improvements in all eight BRIEF subscales, as well as CSE and BKS scores. The control group showed significant improvements in four of the eight BRIEF subscales (initiate, shift, inhibit and planning) and **no** significant improvements in emotional control, self-monitoring, task monitoring, and organization of materials. The control group also showed no improvements in CSE or BKS scores.

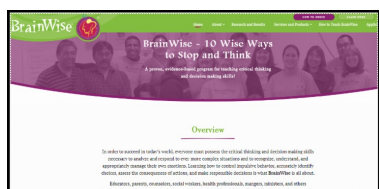
Discussion

Over the years, a number of instruments administered by different researchers have been used to measure the positive changes in behaviors that BrainWise instructors see in their students. All have shown improvements. However, comparing men who were taught BrainWise with men who received the same interventions, but not BrainWise, adds an important research component: both a treatment group and a control group.

Additionally, the BRIEF instrument a validated measure of executive functions showed that BrainWise graduates improved significantly on all eight measures. And even though this paper's results pertain to adults, they indicate that BrainWise improves skills that help individuals solve problems and make good decisions. The findings are an important indicator that the 10 Wise Ways, used and reinforced outside the classroom, help participants stop and think before they react.

A big thank you to Marilyn and her co-authors Amanda Jacobs and Lindsey Beddes, both graduate students at the University of Northern Colorado!

Our new [Website](#) is up!



The BrainWise Board and volunteers worked with the talented team at AOR agency to update the website and make it easier for users to navigate. Please check it out!

Thanks to all BrainWise instructors for making a difference and being part of the solution!



On a lighter note . . .

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