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## Social Support Mediates the Relation between Perceived Ability to Cope with Trauma and PTSD Severity in World Trade Center Trauma Survivors

### (S1-242) Social Support Mediates the Relation Between Perceived Ability to Cope with Trauma and PTSD Severity in World Trade Center Trauma Survivors



Thursday, March 18, 2021



3:30 PM – 4:30 PM

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**Background :** Both a person's social support and perceived ability to cope with trauma have been linked to severity of PTSD symptoms and to differential symptom presentations in chronic PTSD. Perceived ability to cope with trauma can be conceptualized as comprising two modes of coping with trauma: trauma-focused coping (ability to reflect on or face feelings about the traumatic event) and forward-focused coping (ability to maintain goals and plans following a traumatic event). While previous literature has highlighted the influence of trauma coping style on PTSD severity, data are lacking regarding factors that may mediate this association, such as social support and self-efficacy. Such information may help inform more personalized treatments that target psychosocial mechanisms implicated in PTSD.

**Methods :** Data were analyzed from 100 treatment-seeking WTC responders and survivors

with full or subthreshold WTC-related PTSD assessed using the PTSD Checklist for DSM-5 (PCL-5). Perceived ability to cope with trauma was assessed using the Perceived Ability to Cope with Trauma Scale, and social support with the Medical Outcomes Study – Social Support Scale, and self-efficacy with the General Self-Efficacy Scale. A path analysis was conducted to evaluate the role of social support and self-efficacy in mediating the relation between perceived ability to cope and severity of PTSD symptoms.

**Results:** Results revealed that greater social support mediated the relation between forward-focused coping and severity of PTSD symptoms ( $\beta = -0.31$ ). Secondary analyses revealed that this effect was specific to anhedonia ( $\beta = -0.33$ ), dysphoric arousal ( $\beta = -0.27$ ), externalizing behavior ( $\beta = -0.26$ ), and negative affect ( $\beta = -0.24$ ) symptoms. Trauma-focused coping and coping self-efficacy were unrelated to PTSD symptoms.

**Conclusion :** Results suggest that trauma survivors with a forward-focusing coping style may be better able to solicit social support following trauma, which may in turn mitigate PTSD symptoms, particularly anhedonic symptoms. They further underscore the importance of promoting forward-focused coping style and bolstering social support in psychological treatments for PTSD.