Beyond the Traditional Health Classroom: Enhancing Student Ability to Manage Stress Through a Mindfulness-Based CBT Program

Bergen County Technical School-Teterboro
Montclair State University-Clinic for Evidence Based Practices in Schools
Objectives

1. Review the rationale and need for the integration of stress management in the high school setting.

2. Identify and evaluate instruments to measure levels of stress in students.

3. Describe how to implement mindfulness based CBT stress management activities within the health and physical education classroom, including identifying the barriers to implementation and how to overcome them.
We have a Poll Everywhere page for questions. To enter a question:

From a cell phone:

Text DANIELOLIVO758 to 37607 to join the session. Once you are in, text your question.

From a computer:

Go to [https://pollev.com/danielolivo758](https://pollev.com/danielolivo758) and enter your question in the designated space.
School Background

Bergen County Technical High School-Teterboro

- Public magnet high school
- Draws highly academically-motivated and talented students from across the county
- School receives over 1200 applications per year for 170 openings
School Improvement Panel (ScIP) annually creates school goals. In the 16-17 school year they determined an area for concern based on the following data points:

- Number of times students checked their grades on PowerSchool
- Student’s attendance records
- Number and types of referrals to Student Assistance Counselor
- Student responses to high school transition surveys

Data supported anecdotal evidence shared by teachers and students.
Assessing Need

Key findings:

- Students felt overwhelmed frequently in the school setting
- Students had difficulties identifying the signs and triggers of their stress
- Students had few healthy coping strategies to manage their stress
Defining a Measurable Goal

Finalized ScIP Goal:
Integrate five new activities into the core 9th Grade Health curriculum in an effort to increase student capacity to identify the physical and emotional signs of stress.
High School-Local University Partnership: Montclair Clinic for Evidence-Based Practices in Schools

Objectives:

1. Provide basic knowledge on both the biology and psychology of stress.

2. Instruct student on mindfulness practices based within a cognitive behavioral (CBT) framework.
Question Check-In
Implementation

Full faculty training by Dr. Zaheer on the biological/psychological nature of stress and distinctions between eustress/distress

Five lessons delivered in collaboration with Montclair CEPS

All lessons were filmed and resources were adapted by each PE/health teacher involved in the initiative
Agenda for the Next Two Weeks

• Session 1: Overview of stress
• Session 2: Awareness
• Session 3: Mindfulness
• Session 4: Relaxation
• Session 5: Taking Action
What is stress?

• **Stress** is simply a reaction to a demanding circumstance that disturbs our physical or mental equilibrium.

• A stressful event can trigger the “fight-or-flight” response, causing hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol to surge through the body.
TEENS REPORT STRESS SIMILAR TO ADULTS, EXCEEDING LEVELS SEEN AS HEALTHY

- Adults: Past month stress level 5.1
- Teens: Past month stress level 5.8
- Healthy level: Adults 3.6, Teens 3.9

*August 2013

Teen stress levels increased during the school year.
Non-human Animals

Behavior

Thoughts

Feelings

Humans
Implementation

Students are given opportunities to practice mindfulness in both health and physical education classes.

Classes begin and or conclude with mindfulness exercises.

Students are encouraged to keep a mindfulness log to record their practice and progress.
Question Check-In
Data Collection

Data was measured using the following questionnaires modified into Google Forms:

Self reported general stress (Perceived Stress Scale)

Educational Stress (Educational Stress Scale for Adolescents)

Emotional Regulation Abilities (Acceptance and Action Questionnaire-II)

Life Satisfaction (Brief Multi-Dimensional Life Satisfaction Scale)
Pre-Post Analysis

Decrease in general and educational stress

Increase in life satisfaction

Increase in psychological flexibility (reverse scored)

Scaled Score

Perceived Stress: Pre 37.7, Post 17.3
Edu Stress: Pre 51.84, Post 44.06
Psych Flex: Pre 13.85, Post 9.68
Life Satisfaction: Pre 31.73, Post 33.06
Range from 30 seconds to 50 minutes of practice a day
One-Sample T-Test for group comparisons

Indicate that for all four measures, there was a significant change

**Perceived stress**

Significantly decreased from pre to post (p=.001)

**Educational stress**

Significantly decreased from pre to post (p=.001)
Statistical Analysis

Psychological Flexibility

Score significantly decreased from pre to post (p=.001) indicating increase in psychological flexibility.

Quality of Life

Significantly decreased from pre to post (p=.001)
Next steps...

Continuing to assess stress levels in freshmen using questionnaires and Google Forms

Integrating mindfulness activities into academic tasks (ex: students identify values, explain how those values apply in management of a long-term performance task, self assessment of performance)

Training guidance staff and student assistance counselors on psychological flexibility

Create a PLC of teachers to spread the practice of mindfulness to across multiple academic areas
The Psychological Flexibility Model Matrix
Kevin L. Polk, Ph.D.

5-Senses Experiencing

What do you do to move away from the unwanted stuff?

What could you do to move toward who is important to you?

Noticing the Difference

Away

Towards

What unwanted stuff shows up inside of you and gets in the way? (like Fear)

Who and what are important to you?

Mental Experiencing
Question Check-In
Implementation
Barriers to Consider

How would a program like this manifest itself in your school?

Do you have the necessary support from mental health professionals to carry out this type of intervention?

Do you have the necessary support from all staff members to make this a viable component of your school culture?