Increasing Student Success through In-Class Resilience Education

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Background
- Resilience is a cluster of outcomes, traits and processes that occur throughout the lifespan in response to perceived negative events.
- Resilience can occur before, during or after an adverse situation, and is heavily influenced by both internal and external resources used to overcome: recover, grow and learn through the experience of adversity (Chmirtor et al., 2018; Thomas & Revel, 2016).
- Stress can be positive or negative. Short term can boost performance, but long term or extreme stress causes physical problems, and can affect the immune system, the endocrine and central nervous systems (American Psychological Association, 2019).
- When a person has experienced a physiological response to a stressor, sees the stressor as something to avoid, and doesn’t feel able to control the stressor, they are experiencing what we call stress (Northrop, 2016).
- Anxiety is defined by the American Psychological Association (2019) as ‘feelings of tension, worried thoughts and physical changes like increased blood pressure’.
- Experiential coping methods are provided during the class.
- University students report high levels of stress (Noo, Saleem, Azmat, & Aruj, 2017).
- Nursing students learn across multiple settings-classroom, skills lab & clinical areas-as well as online (Sigalit, Sivia, & Michal, 2017).
- Nursing students must learn & apply evolving cognitive information, perform new physical skills, assume expanding responsibilities, and often find their values being challenged (Sigalit et al., 2017).
- Internal stressors can include mindset or personality (Northrop, 2015), ideas about the difficulty of material, academic overload, pressure to perform (McCarthy et al., 2018).
- External stressors include finances, family issues, personal needs (McDonald, Brown, & Knihnitski, 2018).

Fixed vs. growth mindset affects stress.
- Fixed mindset sees being incorrect as a threat to self-image: it means that they have to prove themselves to those in authority, which decreases feelings of control and increases stress (Northrop, 2015).
- Those with a growth mindset are interested in correcting their information, less threatened (Northrop, 2015).
- Higher self-esteem & confidence helps to increase a sense of self-efficacy & control, and is linked to lower stress (McCarthy et al., 2018).

Big Five traits:
- Extraverted, enthusiastic (that is, sociable, assertive, talkative, active, NOT reserved, or shy).
- Agreeable, kind (that is, trusting, generous, sympathetic, cooperative, NOT aggressive, or cold).
- Conscientious, dependable, organized (that is, hard working, responsible, self-disciplined, thorough, NOT careless, or impulsive).
- Emotionally stable, calm (that is, relaxed, self-confident, NOT anxious, moody, easily upset, or easily stressed).
- Open to experience, imaginative (that is, curious, reflective, creative, deep, open-minded, NOT conventional).
- Being extraverted, conscientious, and emotionally stable are associated with lower vulnerability to stress (Bunevicius, Kaktute, & Bunevicius, 2008).

Initial Themes
- Stress is universal, and personal.
- Major student concern in the mental health nursing course: saying the wrong thing to a patient.
- Students worried about personal physical & emotional effects of stress, and used diversion to cope with their stressors.
- Students felt overwhelmed and that they lacked control over the experience of being in school.

Method Themes
- Stress relief is accomplished with a variety of modalities by using deep breathing, a change of focus or distraction to decrease arousal and activation of the sympathetic nervous system.
- Methods should be easy to do, portable, and for some students, cost is a concern.
- Students preferred methods which helped them to be able to relax before or during a test, focus in order to study, and to improve sleep.

Final Themes
- Deep breathing was preferred overall; with the use of inhalation aids for aromatherapy, it was the second most popular method- the scents on cotton in open containers were too strong otherwise.
- Negatives of the experiences were related to specific aspects of the methods:
  - balance problems impacted yoga,
  - students had definite scent preferences and allergy concerns with aromatherapy,
  - some students preferred aerobic exercise to reduce stress.
- Skovholt-identified strengths: Family & friend support; self-care to add to professional vitality
- Skovholt-identified negatives or lacks: Lack of time for self-care; sleep problems; financial problems.

Research Question: What are the effects of an experiential psychiatric/mental health nursing class designed to present methods of stress reduction?

Methods
- Initial data were collected on two groups of students, and methods journals were also collected for both groups (Fall and Spring).
- The summary journal, repeated Beck and the Skovholt were completed on the second group in the Spring semester.
- Students initially completed the Beck Anxiety Inventory and the Ten-Item Personality Inventory/ TIPI (Beck, Epstein, Brown & Steer, 1988; Goslins, Reminol, & Swann, 2005).
- Students initially journaled about their perceptions of stress.
- Students were exposed in class each week to one of these techniques: deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, mindfulness & exercise, aromatherapy, guided imagery, and yoga.
- Each week, students completed a journal entry related to the method that they had experienced.
- After the methods were completed, students repeated the Beck Anxiety Inventory, and completed the Skovholt Practitioner Professional Resiliency and Self-Care inventory (Beck, Epstein, Brown & Steer, 1988; Skovholt & Trotter-Mathieson, 2016).
- Students also completed a final journal entry: Final Perceptions of Stress & Stress Management.

Analysis

Content Analysis
- Journal entries were de-identified and copied into text documents.
- Text was converted to tables using Microsoft Word
- De-identified text was read. Each group of weekly entries was divided into thirds. Initial content themes and patterns were identified by each researcher for their third of the text.
- Summary themes for each topic were then discussed and developed as a group.
- Text answers from the Skovholt related to strengths & lacking areas were also analyzed and summarized.

Statistical Analysis
- SPSS was used for descriptive and bivariate descriptive statistics related to the initial and final Inventories.
- SPSS was used for correlational statistics.

Link to References: https://documentcloud.adobe.com/link/t rack?uri=urn%3Aaaid%3Ascds%3AUS%3Ae719G3J-9f6-3-4571-9511-4d9658834c