The Use of Stress Reducing Techniques in Nursing Education

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Introduction:
Stress is a complex phenomenon that has significant effects on students which may disturb their physiological, psychological, and spiritual health and well-being. Nursing students have been identified to be at high risk for stress during their training.

Review of literature:
Crary (2013) reported that course examinations and clinical practice have been identified as 2 of the most perceived stressors in nursing programs. The demands of nursing programs with heavy course loads and rigorous examinations within a competitive environment can lead to unattainable levels of stress. Most students do not have the tools to help reduce stressors that are tied to nursing school.

Problem Statement:
It is essential that nursing schools provide students with tools to help decrease stress and anxiety.

Implementation:
- Conceptual Models: Neuman Systems Model Complimentary to application of stress intervention in nursing students aimed at decreasing stress prior to exams and improving overall health
- Location for project: Midwestern, Liberal Arts College
- Participants: 87 Senior nursing students over 3 years
- Informed consent obtained

Intervention:
- Ocean waves soundtrack playing with lights dimmed in exam room. Students led through 90 seconds of light stretching followed by 1 minute of deep breathing exercises.

Evaluation Criteria:
- Post intervention self-report of usefulness survey used to assist in gathering supplementary outcomes data
- Student Demographics Form collected

Outcomes:
- 97.7% of all students studied over 3 years reported they would use the stress intervention techniques implemented in the study to reduce stress in the future.
- 2017 cohort = 91.9% of students stated stress intervention decreased their testing anxiety
- 2018 cohort = 96% reporting decreased testing anxiety
- 2019 cohort = 83.3% with decreased testing anxiety
- Data from the 2017 and 2018 cohorts both reported 100% of students felt the stress intervention was helpful
- Data from 2019 cohort stated 80% of students reported the intervention as being helpful.

Discussion:
- Future research could include measuring different outcomes such as exam scores post intervention
- Will consider pre and post stress testing with Cohens PSS in future studies