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Stress and Mindfulness Presentation

Miriam Garcia Cendejas
California State University, Monterey Bay

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Social Emotional Support for Students

Miriam Garcia

Salinas Union High School District Wellness Center: Rancho San Juan High School

Aurelia Garcia & Hayley Newman

Collaborative Health & Human Services

Department of Health Human Services and Public Policy

California State University Monterey Bay

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Author Note

Miriam Garcia, Department of Health Human Services and Public Policy, California State University Monterey Bay. This research was supported by Rancho San Juan High School. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Miriam Garcia, California State University Monterey Bay, 100 Campus Center, Seaside, CA, 93955. Contact: Mgarciacendejas@csumb.edu.

Abstract

Keywords: Stress, Anxiety, Mindfulness

Rancho San Juan High School in Salinas California serves students from ninth to eleventh grade. The problem at this agency is students in need of skills to cope with stress and anxiety. The contributing factors to the problem are unhealthy relationships, family problems, pent up emotions, and distance learning due to the pandemic. The consequences of these contributing factors are vaping, anxiety, fighting, and depression. A powerpoint presentation was presented to those students who need coping skills for stress, depression, and anxiety. The powerpoint introduced students to mindfulness and there was a pre and post survey included in the presentation to obtain students feedback. Results show that students aren't aware of coping skills for stress. Students also were not informed of mindfulness and it's benefits. The recommendation is to continue to present on stress and mindfulness to bring more awareness to students.

Agency & Communities Served

The Salinas Union High School District Wellness Center is a support agency for students in 7th to 12th grades. Rancho San Juan High School is a new high school in Salinas. There is currently no wellness center at this site. The programs offered at Rancho San Juan fall under the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) framework services. The services offered are for students who fall under the Tier II and Tier III interventions. “Tier III provides research-supported, individualized, intensive instructional intervention, and even more frequent progress monitoring for students not responding to Tier II interventions.” (A Multi Tiered, 2011, p. 2). These types of interventions are for students who need individual, group, and family counseling. As well as substance use counseling and anger management classes. Students should know the resources available for them at the school and be able to use them if necessary. “Students demonstrate PBIS Traits by being Resourceful, Synergistic, and Judicious.” (PBIS Traits, 2019). They should be synergistic and be able to get along with each other. Be able to collaborate with classmates, teachers, and other professionals. Students should be judicious, and be good decision makers.

Rancho San Juan mission statement is for RSJ to be a thriving learning community where compassion, courage, and commitment are valued and practiced by all. The vision statement for RSJ is to be a compassionate, collaborative community that provides an innovative and authentic learning experience for all students, empowering them to blaze their own path to post-secondary success and life-long learning. (Rancho San Juan High School, 2019). The intervention specialist is there to support students who fall under Tier II and Tier III. Students rely on the intervention specialist for mental and academic support. The intern serves as a counseling support under the

supervision of the intervention specialist of the school. The intern is there to help the intervention specialist to support students academically and mentally so they can be successful in their high school years.

Rancho San Juan High School's population is made up of 87.2% hispanic students. 8.4% of students are white, 1.3% Filipino, 0.9% other Asian, and 0.6% fall under two or more. (Newman, H. 2020). The population served is mostly hispanics. Since the school is new there is only 9th to 11th grade. In 2021 the school will add a 12th grade. The students' age ranges from fourteen years old to sixteen years old.

Problem Description

The problem at Rancho San Juan High School is students are in need of social and emotional support. Students are in a stage where they are transitioning and anything negative that happens in their life has a really negative impact on them. Covid in 2020 has increased students' social and emotional health and students are struggling in additional ways in their personal life due to virtual learning. They are stressing over virtual classes and others are depressed from being home all day. They are in need of learning coping skills that will help them manage stress and depression.

Contributing Factors

One of the contributing factors to students suffering from depression and anxiety is unhealthy relationships. Unhealthy relationships are not just with a boyfriend or girlfriend, it is also the relationship they have with their parents, siblings, friends, etc. There have been a lot of students that feel depressed due to the transition from middle school to high school. Students also feel sad when they lose a close friend from that transition. Also not having a good relationship

with their parents is another contributing factor for students to feel depressed. They want to have a good bond with their parents and to not lose their trust. They want to be able to be understood by their parents. Another of the contributing factors is having family problems. Parents getting divorced is one of the main family problems students have to face. "Previous research has shown that most children experiencing parental divorce describe the process as stressful and add that this experience may result in anxiety and depression (Amato, 2001)." (Grubb and Long, 2014, para 9). Parents divorce really affects students in their personal and academic life. They do not know how to accept that their parents are divorce and they have to take turns to see their dad or mom. They worry about their parents' future partners and the relationship they will have with them. "Family financial stress can exacerbate these issues, and studies show that girls are more at risk than boys."(Schrobsdorff, 2016, para.5). Also families having financial problems is very stressful for teens. Wondering if they will continue to have a roof over their head is a stress factor.

Another contributing factor is having pent emotions. Since they don't have the skills to cope with the negative in their lives they just let all their emotions accumulate and when they can't handle it anymore they explode and end up in a bad consequence. One last contributing factor is the effects of the pandemic, COVID19. "With the sudden halt to in-person learning, many students missed their friends, yearned to be out of the house, developed erratic sleep habits and drove their (often working) parents crazy. On top of that, many were dealing with the trauma of sick or dying family members, economic hardship and disruption to the life they once had." (Richards, 2020, para. 4). Students have been struggling since the closing of in person schooling. Students feel stress with distance learning because it requires them to be in front of

the screen for five hours or more. Some students have been feeling depressed by not being able to attend school to see their friends and doing regular activities. Others have been dealing with sick family members affected by the virus. Lastly, there are students who are in an abusive family situation and school might be the only safe place for them.

Consequences

One of the main consequences students face is anxiety and depression. “Anxiety and depression in high school kids have been on the rise since 2012 after several years of stability. It’s a phenomenon that cuts across all demographics—suburban, urban and rural; those who are college bound and those who aren’t.” (Schrobsdorff, 2016, para.5). With all the problems they have they feel lost and sad. They don’t find that there is a purpose in life and this sometimes leads to them attempting suicide. “Whitlock, the director of the self-injury research program at Cornell, explains that studies are pretty consistent in showing that people who injure themselves do it to cope with anxiety or depression.” (Schrobsdorff, 2016, para. 36). Teens use self-harm to find a way out to their problems. Anxiety and depression is a serious issue among teens. The number of suicide risk assessments in Rancho San Juan High School for the first semester was 12 assessments, compare to the Salinas Union High School District that was 77 assessments for the 11 schools in Salinas. (Newman, 2020). They also get into fights because they have been holding all their emotions. The consequences of the students not having healthy relationships and having family problems leads to them doing bad in school since they don’t know how to cope with their problems. There are students who have good grades but they just don’t know how to deal with their emotions. Some of the behaviors students show is fighting in school with other classmates.

Vaping has become a real problem in the school. There has been a lot of suspension for students vaping in school. They take this as a coping skill to their problems. During the pandemic students are more aware of the struggles their parents have to go through. “Student mental health needs vary around the state. In rural areas, it’s not COVID-19 or cramped living quarters that’s driving student stress. It’s economics. Facing high unemployment and a lack of financial stability, some students are scrapping their college plans to work or help their families, said Becky Love, counseling coordinator at the Shasta County Office of Education.” (Jones, 2020, para. 17).

Problem Model

Contributing Factors	Problem	Consequences
Unhealthy relationships	Students in need of social emotional support.	vaping
Family problems		anxiety/depression
Pent up emotions		fighting

Sick family members due to pandemic		Depressed/ sad
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Capstone Project Description and Justification

Capstone Project

The capstone project will be a presentation that focuses on two different topics; stress and mindfulness. The presentation will be conducted virtually to students who get referred by their counselor. It will be conducted in two sessions. The presentation will last from twenty five minutes to thirty minutes long. The presentation will provide students with information about

what stress is, what causes stress, and how it affects us. The presentation will also provide information about what mindfulness is, the benefits it has, and who can practice mindfulness. It will finalize by providing different ways of practicing mindfulness. Videos about stress and mindfulness will be shown in the two different sessions. In the beginning of the presentation, there will be a survey for students to answer on how they are feeling at the moment. For the first sessions, which is about stress, there will be a stress self assessment to see where the students stand. Before talking about mindfulness there will be a pre survey asking a few questions of what they know about mindfulness and a couple questions on how they feel when they are stressed out.

At the end of the presentation there will be a post survey asking students how they think the presentation went and what they are taking away from it. At the end of the presentation students will choose one activity to practice mindfulness. After practicing mindfulness they will answer another survey asking them how they feel after practicing mindfulness. The surveys will provide data on how informed the students were before the presentation and what they learn after the presentation.

Another one of the ways to collect data will be the survey on how they feel before the presentation and after practicing mindfulness. This is the best way to do it virtually. This will be helpful to know the students mental state before and after the presentation. This will provide insight in the future for teachers to know their students' mental state and if they see a lot of students with negative mental states they can refer them to counseling or request a presentation.

Project Purpose

The purpose of this presentation project is for students to learn the different stress factors at school, home, and in their personal life. This presentation will provide coping skills. Also for students to learn the importance of creating their negative thoughts into positive ones. This will help them to have a growth mindset, instead of giving up. Learning about self-care is also very important for students, to know that it is ok to set some time for yourself. They will learn to be mindful of their feelings and emotions. “Mindfulness is good for our minds: Several studies have found that mindfulness increases positive emotions while reducing negative emotions and stress.” (Mindfulness, n.d., para. 5). Learning about mindfulness will be a great coping skill for students to use whenever they’re feeling stressed out. It will help them have better control with their future emotions. They will be able to be in the moment and in their feelings without judgement. This presentation will exhibit healthy mindfulness coping skills for daily stress and anxiety, Students will be able to obtain a positive outlook on life and express gratitude (e.g. emotional check in /check out activity) and the ability to identify strong emotions and work through them.

Project Justification

The evidence shows that all students in this project are dealing with stress and anxiety. All this is due to different stressors; family, friendships, and school. They do not have the appropriate coping skills to help them. According to *The California Student Mental Health Scorecard, 2015-2017*, “ ten 9th graders and fourteen 11th graders Missed school because they felt very sad, hopeless, anxious, stressed or angry (past 30 days).” This shows evidence that students have been showing these emotions in the past years in schools.

Project Implementation

The first step to implement the project is to get authorization from the principal and counselors for the presentation to happen. Teachers collaboration will also be needed in order to know if they have any students in their class that will benefit from this presentation. In March the planning of the project started by collaborating with the intervention specialist on ideas for the presentation. We worked on putting together the presentation in the summer and in early September. The pre and post surveys were created in the month of October. The survey will be provided for the students before and after the presentation. The presentation will take place in November on two different days. It will be presented in the stress management support group, which will be divided in two different days. The first week was presented to the stress management group on October 27. Out of seven students that were supposed to be part of the group only two joined the google meet. The first part of the presentation was about stress, what it is, how it affects your body, and providing one coping skill for students to practice. The second part of the presentation was about mindfulness. The second presentation took place on November 3. This second part of the presentation covered what mindfulness is and its benefits. It also included videos of how other students have benefitted from mindfulness. As well as providing different resources for students to practice mindfulness on their own.

Assessment Plan

Pre and post surveys were created to collect quantitative data with students' responses. The surveys will provide data on the effectiveness of the project. The pre and post surveys were created in the month of October. Pre surveys are available in english and spanish, but only the english version was used since the participating students are english speakers. The surveys were

approved by my mentor and counselors to make sure the correct questions were appropriate to use to collect data. To measure effectiveness during the virtual presentation students were required to answer the questions on the google form. The students participated in the surveys.

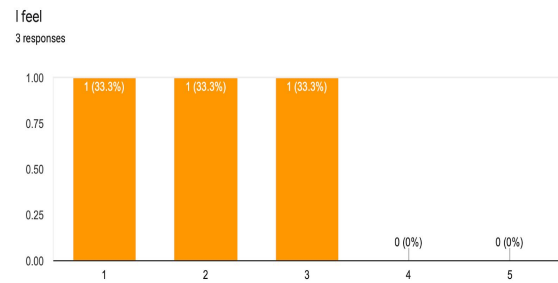
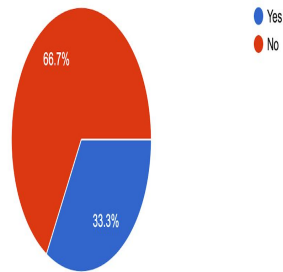
Expected Outcomes

This project should provide students with coping skills tools for anxiety and stress. It will help them to be mindful of their feelings. This project should minimize anxiety and stress on students. The project should bring awareness to students and teachers. Teachers should be able to be more understanding of the students behaviors. Every student's behavior has a reason behind it. Students behave a certain way to express how they feel or what they are going through. Teachers will be able to provide students with the support they need. The presentation will provide students with resources for different ways to practice mindfulness. Providing students with resources will teach them different coping skills to practice on their own time.

Project Results

The two parts of the project presentation were done in two different sections. The first part took place on October 27 and the second part took place on November 3. There were a total of seven students. In the first part of the presentation only three students joined the google meet. The three students who participated in the first day of the presentation were able to answer the surveys provided to them. The first survey was in the beginning of the presentation. The survey was about how they were feeling at that moment, from 1-5, 1 meaning happy and 5 meaning very sad. One student was feeling happy and the other student was feeling more in the middle between happy and very sad.

Would you like someone to follow up with you today?
3 responses

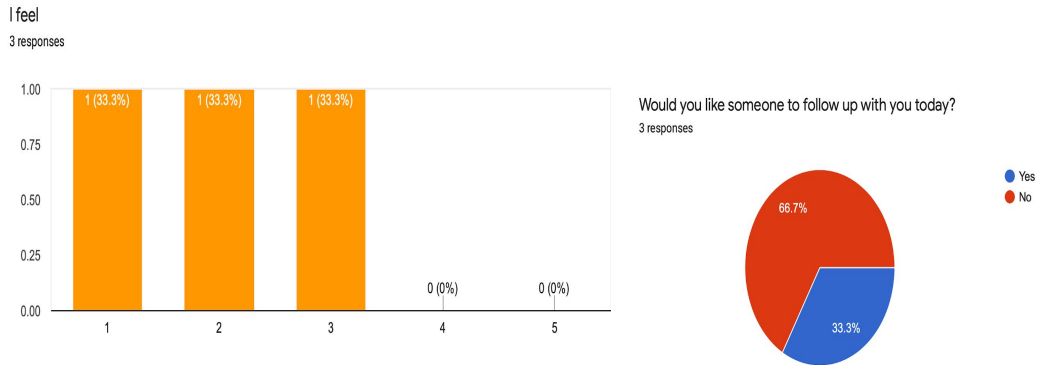


The second survey for the first part of the presentation was a stress management self-assessment. The self-assessment survey had nine questions about stress. For the self assessment survey three students participated. Based on the students' responses on how well they can manage their stress level, they fall in the middle. They also fall in the middle for the question if they are able to identify three coping skills to manage stress. All students were able to list at least one coping skill they use to manage their stress. Three of the coping skills the students mentioned were; breathing, listening to calming music, and talking to someone close to them. Two students were able to identify at least one thinking trap they tend to fall into when feeling stress. The two thinking traps students tend to fall into is procrastination and overthinking. The other student didn't provide an answer to this question. Participants rated their full day attendance at school from average to very well.

[Pre Stress Management Self-Assessment](#)

The second part of the presentation was about mindfulness. In this presentation there were three surveys for the students to answer. Out of six students who were referred to participate only the same three from the first presentation participated. The first survey was a mental health check in. This survey was created to know how the students were feeling that day.

The answers were different for the three students. Ranging from happy to in between happy and very sad. When asked if they wanted someone to follow up with them. Only one student said yes.



The second survey was a pre survey about what students knew about mindfulness. The first question was if they had a good understanding of what mindfulness is, two students answered false and one student answered yes. For the second question regarding if they practice mindfulness when stressed, the three students answered false. They do not practice any type of mindfulness activities. The third question was that students tend to focus well in school. One student answered true and the other two students answered false meaning they do not tend to focus well in school. Students' response to the question if they tend to pause and breath when feeling stressed was true. They do pause and breathe when they feel stressed. I tend to walk quickly to get where I'm going without paying attention to what I experience along the way. For this question two students responded false and one student responded true. I experience moments of inner peace and ease, even when things get hectic and stressful. One student responded true and two students responded false, they do not experience moments of inner peace when things get stressful. Students responded false to the question if they are aware of different ways to practice mindfulness.

[Pre Survey Mindfulness](#)

The post survey was answered by two students out of the three that participated. For the first questions; I have a very good understanding of what mindfulness is, students responded true to this question. After the presentation they had a better understanding of what mindfulness is. For the question, “I practiced mindfulness when I feel stressed”, students' responses were true and false. For the question, “ I focus well in school”, students' responses were also true and false. I pause and breathe whenever I feel stressed, students respond true to it. I tend to walk quickly to get where I’m going without paying attention to what I experience along the way, for this question students also responded true and false. I experience moments of inner peace and ease, even when things get hectic and stressful, students respond true and false. I am aware of different ways to practice mindfulness, students responded true to the question. After this presentation students learned different coping skills for mindfulness. The presentation was understandable and informative, students' answers were agreed and strongly agreed. After practicing mindfulness, I felt better than before the presentation?, students' answers were true. Students were able to practice mindfulness at the end of the presentation.

[Post Survey Mindfulness](#)

The project went well but it didn’t turn out how I expected it to be. Seven students were referred by their counselor to participate in the stress management group. They were referred because they were struggling with stress and anxiety. Only three out of those seven students participated in the group. The project did achieve the expected outcomes, which were for students to have coping skills for stress and anxiety and to learn about mindfulness to minimize their stress.

Conclusion & Recommendations

After working on this project, the results show that the students who participated didn't know about coping strategies to manage their stress and anxiety. The stress factors mentioned by the students responses were overthinking, procrastination, and distance learning. Distance learning has been very difficult for the students. They do not enjoy sitting down in front of the computer for five hours. This is one of the reasons why the other students who were referred didn't participate in the group. When I called the students to find out if they were going to join the group, their answers were that they didn't want to spend more time in front of the screen. Distance learning also affects the students by not being able to hang out with their friends. One of the positive sides students see in distance learning is being able to spend more time with their families.

After implementing this project, research shows that this project should continue to get implemented in the future. Students need to learn more about stress and mindfulness. Results show that students didn't know much about different stress coping skills and mindfulness. Informing students about this will help them to cope with their feelings, emotions, and behaviors.

Personal Reflection

After completing this project I learned that students struggle with their feelings, emotions, and behaviors. Some of the stress factors at the beginning of starting this project were; family problems, pent up emotions, unhealthy relationships. Another stress factor was added to their life when the pandemic happened. Students felt more stress with the virtual classes. They don't enjoy sitting in front of the computer for five hours or more. Also not being able to go out and spend time with their friends. I also learned that students don't have coping skills to manage

their stress. After practicing mindfulness students learned that there are different ways to cope with stress. One way we practiced mindfulness was the five senses. This activity consisted of just being mindful of the present; smell, taste, vision, hearing, and touch. A student resources form was created with different websites about different activities to practice mindfulness. I also learned that students lack the motivation to participate in extracurricular activities. For example, for this project seven students were referred by their counselor to participate in it, but only three of them participated. The answer from the rest of the students was that they did not want to spend more time in front of the computer.

The strengths of the project were the coping skills activities on mindfulness. Based on the pre and post surveys, students learned about mindfulness, its benefits, and different mindfulness activities they can do. Students found the mindfulness presentation very helpful. Another of the strengths of the project was that students learned that others also feel stress. They realize that stress is a feeling that is present in everyday life is just the way you take it. Another of the activities I found helpful for the students was the webpage GritX, this page provides different activities for students. This page includes four different activities; Journal, catch your breath, sketchbook, and grit stories. It allows students to express themselves and they are able to save their work on their computer.

One of the limitations of the project was having only twenty five minutes to go over the presentation and some students would log in late. That would leave me with less time to present and had to make it in a hurry. One challenge was that students weren't required to have their cameras on for the presentation so that made it difficult for me to see if they were really paying attention.

A broader health or social issue my project relates to is mental health. Feelings and emotions are part of the mental health state. This project addresses in a small way this issue by informing students about stress and introducing ways to cope with it with mindfulness. This is just a small part of what can be done to bring more awareness on mental health for students. What can be done to address this problem is to provide presentations on mental health and mindfulness from middle school through high school. These presentations can be done two times a year, one in fall and one in the spring. By doing this students will be able to have a better control of their feelings and emotions. Also students will be able to normalize mental health. They will learn that mental health matters for all humans.

My advice to other students starting their capstone is to always ask questions. Don't pretend to know it all. Another advice would be to really invest time at your agency, because you will get a lot of experience from your mentor and other coworkers. This experience can open up a lot of doors for you. Also asking to be part of different projects and activities can really give you a broader idea of your future educational and professional goals. My last advice is to not be hard on yourself. You are capable of any challenge that you face.

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Appendix A

Scope of Work

Activities	Deliverables	Timeline/Deadlines	Supporting Staff
Create pre and post survey Pre: Pre Survey Mindfulness Post: Post Survey Mindfulness	This will provide me with data to support my project.	October 13	Ms. Garcia
Create a mental health check in form Mental Health Check In	This will allow students to express how they are feeling and if they need a professional to check in with them.	October 13	Ms. Garcia
Create a student resources form Student Resources	This will help students to learn different coping skills on how to deal with stress and anxiety.	October 20	Ms. Garcia
Create a stress management survey Stress Management Survey	This survey will allow students to respond how well they manage their stress.	October 20	Ms Garcia
Create presentation	Students learn about stress management and mindfulness.	October 20	Ms. Garcia
First part of the presentation October 27, 2020	The presentation will be held one Tuesday during the month of October . The first part was about stress management.	Fall 2020	Ms. Garcia
Second part of the presentation on November 03, 2020	The second part of the presentation was on mindfulness.	Fall 2020	Ms. Garcia