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Improving Stress Management for Young Adolescents

James Carlin

A Capstone project for the Bachelor of Science in Human Development and Family

Science

Introduction

Many young kids deal with stress that tends to lead to general anxiety disorders. This has been heightened among the youth during and after the Covid 19 pandemic. A lack of awareness in how to manage stress can become overwhelming. Overwhelming stress can scaffold into further anxiety disorders within the child's future. This is where anxiety disorders may start to develop once the child starts entering later adolescents and young adulthood. In order to address this issue I created a four day skateboarding lesson program for five elementary school students who are from the ages of six to eleven years old. Within this lesson plan I had created, I brought forward ways of managing stress with the participants as the learning basic skateboarding maneuvers took place.

Need Statement

Not knowing how to manage oncoming stress can be crippling for young individuals. Consequences of this problem may heighten even worse further down the road, creating new stressors that may be harder to manage. I chose skateboarding because it is a sport that I love and wanted to share with my participants. I gravitated towards my participants because they have recently become interested in skateboarding and had been wanting to take lessons with me prior to my Capstone Project. Skateboarding is a sport that involves many situations of trial and error when

trying to succeed in learning new maneuvers. When children are trying to learn a new activity, it is important for them to process acceptance through trial and error. “In particular, the error - related negativity (ERN) is an increased negative deflection in the event - related potential occurring approximately 59 ms after the commission of errors compared with correct responses in speeded reaction time tasks.”, (Dyson, Hajak, Kim, Klien, Kujawa, Olino, 2013). The guidance I provided for the participants to manage their oncoming stressors will be tools used for future stressors that may not be directly linked to the topic of skateboarding. From what I learned from my three sub areas of the problem were that managing stress wasn't only about identifying it strictly as its own entity. I discovered that when finding other common interests of the individual participants, I was able to merge an already established positive reinforcement to help fight the current negative. This was seen with the participant Emma who is fond of music and is on a dance team. One of her ways of fighting the stress of gradual speed on the skateboard was to play her favorite songs from dance class in her head while snapping her fingers. Energy transformation is key to managing stress when learning to ride a skateboard. Since I am a retired professional skateboarder who is majoring in Human Development Family Science and minoring in teaching, I am well equipped in guiding my participants. “The teaching situation in which this form of knowing appears in this case study is very much a dialectical sociocultural process that occurs between teacher and learner.”, (Backstrom, 2014). Young adolescents are also going through changes of self identity and creating social groups with friends. Socializing with peers helps fight against stressors and skateboarding is a very positive social activity for where many individuals become friends and learn from each other. A universal

prevention program known as FRIENDS showed the positive results on interventions with young children in the importance of developing a healthy sociable friendship with others. “At three month follow up assessment, anxiety symptoms significantly decreased and self esteem increased.”, (Conradt, Essau, Ollendick, Sasgawa, 2012). Another interesting concept I learned was that my own personal experiences of having stressors at a young age and how to manage them was actually relatable towards the participants' experience while out riding their skateboards. Upon completion of my Capstone Project, my goal was to have my participants demonstrate the use of positive self - talk in managing stress in learning skateboarding, indicate one refocused self - talk strategy in managing stressors, and to identify two signs of body awareness of stressors. Positive self talk allows for the participants to build more confidence with their learning experience on the skateboard. “The idea of self - talk can have benefits is among the fundamental principles underlying the development of cognitive behavioral therapies: treatments aiming at changing individuals' thoughts, interpretations, and behaviors.” (Galanis, Hatzigeorgiadis, Theodorakis, Zourbanos, 2011.). This was my technique in addressing the oncoming stressors to the participants.

Another subarea that I focused on was for the participants to be able to identify at least two signs of body awareness of stressors. This is for the participants to learn how to be aware of what's happening for when the stressors arise. With identifying the physical changes for when the stressors are coming on the participants will be more prepared in soothing the transition inwards with a clearer focus instead of eventually becoming overwhelmed. Sweating became a valid indicator towards oncoming stress with my participants which is a common form of a physical reaction towards anxiety.

Many of these physical signs of stressors are formed by the body's way of trying to deal with the situation that is causing it. "Stress signals evoke neuroendric responses in human stimulating cardiovascular, metabolic, and endocrine processes that enable the individual to cope with stress." (Burger, Keychani, Lehmbeck, Max, Schmidt - Rose, 2013.). With these sub areas of addressing stress management while skateboarding I had completed my primary goal of going from teaching a lesson on how to skateboard while multi-tasking the refocused agenda in stress management. It is important to point out that stress is normal for individuals to have while learning something new. What is not ideal is to have that stress build up to become overwhelming. A lot of how the body handles stress is also due to a mind set. "When perception of situational demands exceeds personal resources one is more likely to elicit challenge response. Both responses are characterized by vascular Ute construction in anticipation of harm or defeat." (Bamaszkiewicz, 2017.).

Theory/Development

The theory I have chosen for my Capstone Project is Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory. Social Learning theory looks into the importance of individuals observing modeling, while imitating the overall behaviors of others to learn new information. Emotional reactions from others are included in the theory as influential. The theory also considers the importance of environmental and cognitive factors and how they influence learning and behavior. Since I will be giving skateboarding lessons that will combine stress management techniques, Bandura's Social Learning Theory validates my lesson plan with the fact that these young adolescents will be following my

instructions by observing me doing them in real time. The emotional learning aspect of the theory will be observed by me giving lessons on how to manage stress with the difficulty of trial and error in executing skateboarding maneuvers. As far as modeling, while the lesson is introduced, I will explain what we will be doing and will do a quick stationary “kick flip” to grab the participants attention. For the instructional content, I will be physically doing the moves in front of the participants. For example, I will be teaching the participants how to kick turn while kick turning myself. This practice is to expose them to what to expect and how to execute the maneuver, consistent with Bandura’s idea of imitating while observing. I will purposely fall in a way to reassure them of the error and then walk them through the steps of what I do to manage the stress that may arise when the goal gets disrupted by error.

Consideration of Diversity

For this lesson, the participants must be able-bodied, given the challenges of skateboarding. If participants were not able-bodied, I would have to rearrange tactics in lesson planning. All participants speak English as their primary language. My project content may be applied to broad audiences. The primary differences between older and younger audiences in my lesson plan would be physical and mental maturity. My lesson plan will be also inclusive for the parents (who will be present) of the participants in learning about how their child is managing success in stress management throughout the lesson.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the project, participants will be able to...

1. Demonstrate the use of positive talk in managing stress in learning skateboarding.
2. Indicate one refocused self-talk strategy in managing stressors.
3. identify two signs of body awareness of stressors.

Method

I originally planned on having the skateboarding lessons at the Monterey skatepark, but due to the recent rain storms, the skatepark remained flooded and became not an option. I then decided to have the lessons outside one of the participants' houses, who was Charlie Case. The participants were Charlie (8 years old), Emma (10 years old), Crue (8years old), Victoria (6 years old), and Giuliana (11 years old). The first day I introduced the participants to the lesson plans I would be teaching them. I told them that we were going to have skateboard lessons and at the same time learn how to deal with oncoming stress that may arise. I then allowed the participants to free skate for twenty minutes. While they were all riding around on their skateboards I would help guide them with tricks and tips on how to maneuver their skateboard around. Basic concepts included tricks such as "The Coffin" (laying down on the skateboard while holding hands up in praying position), "Tiktak" (moving the front wheels up from either side to help direct the direction of the skateboard), and the "kick turn" (performing a full 90 degree angle or 180 degree turn to redirect direction on the skateboard). After twenty minutes I brought the participants in for a group discussion on positive self talk. This was to identify possible stressors that may have been arising while the skateboarding was taking place. I continued on with another break within the lesson to

refocus on self talk strategies in managing stress. This strategy was to work off of the original positive self talk method and to build off with branched ideas on how to manage the oncoming stress.

On day 2 I discussed with them on how to identify body changes in oncoming stress and how to manage the stress before it becomes overwhelming. Participants chose a bodily movement to distract and use up energy to focus on the next learning outcome on the skateboard. The body movements would help to distract the participants from over analyzing the challenge. "You must learn to identify the moment when we begin to have this type of thoughts that overwhelm and overtake us, so we can act before the anxiety becomes excessive. To do this, we must perform relaxation techniques" (Sian, 2022.). This is essential in being able to slow the stress process. One of the main techniques I informed the participants was to take three deep breaths as the stress becomes oncoming. This helps to slow down the oncoming stress in a meditative way.

Third day lesson I observed and reassured when participants needed to be reminded of management skills. As the lesson continued I was able to continue on how to learn more basic maneuvers in riding the skateboard. The fourth day was another observed skateboarding lesson with helpful guidance when needed. "The study carried out by Hayama and Inoue showed a reduction of tension anxiety and fatigue through the use of deep breathing." (Bertolo, Blandini, Buscemi, Coco, Corrado, Fecarotta, Fichera, Perciavalle, 2017).

Results

Upon completion of the project, 2 of the participants were able to demonstrate the use of positive talk in managing stress in learning skateboarding, indicate on refocused self - talk strategy in managing stressors, and identified two signs of body awareness of stressors. Crue had attended two sessions out of the four. For the most part of the lessons, Crue primarily shadowed what Charlie was doing. Crue did express that chewing gum helps with his stress management when he feels that it may be oncoming. Giuliano and Victoria attended one session. They ended up enjoying themselves with skateboarding and observing Charlie, Emma, and Crue participate in further lesson plans. No objectives were met for Giuliana and Victoria. Charlie attended all four sessions. His choice of self talk was that he would repeat in his head that he could do what he pictured wanting to do. His refocused self talk, was able to tell himself that objects are smaller than they appear. He chose to do a dance before going down the hill. Two signs of body awareness were sweaty palms and hot forehead. Emma attended all four sessions. Her choice of self talk was to tell herself to slow down and take three deep breaths. Refocused self talk was that she continued to take three deep breaths then doing a cartwheel. The cartwheel got replaced with snapping fingers on the last two days. Two signs of awareness were sweaty palms and shortness of breath. Participants Emma and Charlie displayed remembered tools of how to manage stress on their own while continuing to succeed in skateboarding lessons.

Results

Participants Emma and Charlie were able to demonstrate the use of positive talk in managing stress in learning skateboarding, indicate on refocused

self-talk strategy in managing stressors, and were able to identify two signs of body awareness of stressors. On the dates of April 7 - 9 and April 15, to see if the participants learned new skills of how to manage stress I observed them on the second and third day to see if they would use their new insight on their own without me intervening. I would bring in self-talk guidance to help scaffold the participants already taught stress management skills that were primarily taught on the first day and less so on the second day. By the third day Emma and Charlie not only met my wanted expectations, but continued to pursue skateboarding at a more advanced skill level than from where they were at from the first day of lessons. This was seen from the parents and my perspective for when Charlie started going down the peak of his hill in “coffin” form, without hesitation. The first and second day, self talk and bodily awareness of on coming stressors was heavily analyzed before going down the hill was attempted. Video recording throughout the lessons was filmed to observe proof of skills met. After mastering the hill, Charlie then attempted to learn how to “Ollie” (jumping up with all four wheels in the air). While practicing the ollie, I observed his self talk for stress management began to be used. Participants Emma and Charlie were also able to describe their new stress management skill to their parents and showed interest in wanting to know if their parents had their own techniques for managing stress. I believe the project's learning outcome was half met. Victoria and Giuliano only participated for the first day lesson. Crue wasn't originally planning on being a participant, but wanted to skateboard with Charlie. Charlie and Emma fully participated in the lessons and gave me their full attention when having to discuss stress management techniques while out skateboarding.

Discussion

I believe the outcomes were met for Emma and Charlie. From what I learned was that it becomes tricky in getting those who were not as interested in the act of skateboarding to participate with further instructions as the lesson plans moved forward. Overall, everyone had a good time and there were never any moments of conflict between the participants and myself. My results for Emma and Charlie were absolutely consistent with the theory I chose, which was Albert Banduras Social Learning Theory. I noticed that when I physically did the skateboarding maneuver in front of the participants, the participants were able to grasp what was being shown. It was easier for the participants to understand. When sharing what I do for my own personal ways of managing stress, it seemed to bridge a happy medium between teacher and student. For inclusive diversity, I could have ventured out to see if those who were hard of hearing or blind would have liked to partake in skateboarding, stress management lessons. I personally know a few skateboarders who have disabilities. These each being blind, hard of hearing, and having one arm. It could be very rewarding to have a future lesson plan with those individuals involved in teaching. If I had another shot at doing this project, I believe I would try more of a marketing approach to get more participants involved. This may include fliers to be handed out within the community. Even though my project wasn't 100% successful, I still found the value in helping children manage stress through exercise. Attending children's needs is the most rewarding accomplishment I can think of. Having a connection with helping children while having

fun is truly a reflection on remembering what life was like for when I was the participants' ages.

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